

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-second  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 6 and 7, 2002



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# Report of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 2002. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 6, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the general priesthood session and the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and were made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, Dennis B.

Neuenschwander, Charles Didier, and Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Christofel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Gerald N. Lund, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, William R. Walker, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 10:00 A.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Spirit of God." President Faust then made the following remarks.

### President James E. Faust

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and the Assembly Hall. We also recognize the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at [lds.org](http://lds.org).

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Spirit of God" and will now favor us with "God Is Love." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "God Is Love."

Elder Bruce C. Hafen offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

We will now be privileged to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Remarkable growth of the Church

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to meet with you again in a great world conference of the Church.

One hundred and seventy-two years ago today, Joseph Smith and his associates met in the inconspicuous log house on the Peter Whitmer farm in the quiet village of Fayette, New York, and organized the Church of Christ.

From that modest beginning something truly remarkable has happened. Great has been the history of this work. Our people have endured every kind of suffering. Indescribable have been their sacrifices. Immense beyond belief have been their labors. But out of all of this fiery crucible has come something glorious. Today we stand on the summit of the years and look about us.

From the original six members has grown a vast family of worshipers, 11 million-plus strong. From that quiet village has grown a movement that today is scattered through some 160 nations of the earth. This has become the fifth largest church in the United States. That is a remarkable development. More members of the Church reside out of this nation than in it. That too is a remarkable thing. No other church to come out of the soil of America has grown so fast or spread so widely. Within its vast embrace are members from many nations who speak many tongues. It is a phenomenon without precedent. As the tapestry of its past has unrolled, a beautiful pattern has come to view. It finds expression in the lives of a happy and wonderful people. It portends marvelous things yet to come.

When our people first arrived in this valley 155 years ago, they saw with prophetic vision a great future. But I sometimes wonder if they really sensed the magnitude of that dream as it would unfold.

### **Positive impressions during the Olympics**

The headquarters of the Church are in this city, which recently hosted the 19th Winter Olympics. We made a deliberate decision that we would not use this as a time or place to proselytize, but we were confident that out of this significant event would come a wonderful thing for the Church. The great buildings we have here—the temple, the Tabernacle, this magnificent Conference Center, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the family history facilities, the Church Administration Building, the Church Office Building, our welfare facilities, together with scores of chapels in this valley—could not be overlooked by those who walked the streets of this and neighboring cities. As Mike Wallace once remarked to me, “These structures all denote something solid.”

And beyond this, we had total confidence in our people, many thousands of them, who would serve as volunteers in this great undertaking. They would be dependable; they would be pleasant; they would be knowledgeable; they would be accommodating. The unique and distinctive capacity of our people in speaking the languages of the world would prove to be a tremendous asset beyond anything to be found elsewhere.

Well, it all worked out. The visitors came by the hundreds of thousands. Some came with suspicion and hesitancy, old and false images persisting in their minds. They came feeling they might get trapped in some unwanted situation by religious zealots. But they found something they never expected. They discovered not only the scenic wonder of this area, with its magnificent mountains and valleys, they found not only the wonderful spirit of the international games at their best, but they found beauty in this city. They found hosts who were gracious and accommodating and anxious to assist them. I do not wish to infer that such hospitality was limited to our people. The entire community joined together in a great expression of hospitality.

### **Laudatory comments of journalists**

Out of all of this came something wonderful for this Church. Representatives of the media, so often a tough and calloused group, with very few exceptions spoke and wrote in language both complimentary and accurately descriptive of a unique culture they found here, of the people they met and dealt with, of the spirit of hospitality which they felt.

Television carried the picture to billions of people across the earth. Newspapers and magazines ran story after story.

Thousands upon tens of thousands walked through Temple Square, admired the majestic house of the Lord, sat in the Tabernacle and listened to the matchless

music of the choir. More thousands filled this great Conference Center to watch a wonderful production dealing with the Church and its worldwide mission. Other thousands visited the Family History Center. The media were hosted in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We were interviewed for television, radio, and the press by correspondents from many parts of this nation and from across the world. I am told that nearly 4,000 stories about the Church appeared in the German press alone.

Georgie Anne Geyer, prominent syndicated writer whose column appears in many newspapers, wrote as follows:

"How on Earth could a largely Mormon state do something so daring as hosting an international celebrity meeting? Would the world come gladly to a state whose dominant religion asks members to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and even caffeine, three staples of international conferences?"

And then she went on to quote Raymond T. Grant, artistic director of the Olympic Arts Festival. He talked of the opening ceremony and said:

"You know, 98 percent of the entire cast were volunteers, and that's huge. In fact, most were not paid at all. This is an extraordinary story, and I'd link it directly to Mormon culture. As a Catholic boy from New York, I found it interesting that Brigham Young, the founder of the Utah settlement of the Mormons, built a theater before anything else."

"He went on to tally up: The state has six dance companies; more pianos and harps are sold in Utah than anywhere in the United States; the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has [360] members; and the oldest Steinway dealership in Utah . . . was started as early as 1862. In Utah, their per capita spending on students is one of the lowest—yet they boast high test scores. 'It has been fascinating for me, having to tap into this culture.'"

Miss Geyer concluded her story by writing: "It is simply the mix of a serious and upright religion, of families who foster and insist upon providing the highest levels of culture right along with the highest modern technology, and of generally sensible organizing and governing. In short, it is a modern mix of the old America" ("Salt Lake City and State of Utah Reveal Themselves to the World," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 Feb. 2002, A15).

If there were time, I could give you many quotations from the seasoned journalists of the world, who wrote in a most laudatory fashion.

Was there anything negative? Of course. But it was minimal. We had private interviews with presidents of nations, with ambassadors, with leaders in business and other fields.

### **Fulfillment of Brigham Young's prophecy**

In 1849, two years after our people first arrived here and following the discovery of gold in California, many were discouraged. They had struggled to wrest a living from the arid soil. Crickets had devoured their crops. The winters were cold. Many thought they would go to California and get rich. President Young stood before them and encouraged them to remain, promising that "God will temper the climate, and we shall build a city and a temple to the Most High God in this place. We will extend our settlements to the east and west, to the north and to the south, and we will build towns and cities by the hundreds, and thousands of the Saints will gather in from the nations of the earth. This will become the great highway of the nations. Kings and emperors and the noble and wise of the earth will visit us here" (in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* [1936], 128).

We have witnessed the fulfillment of that prophecy in these recent days. Need-



less to say, I am happy with what has happened. Those visitors tasted the distinctive culture of this community. We believe that culture is worth preserving. I compliment and thank our people who participated in such numbers and so generously, and I compliment and thank all others who worked together to make of this a wonderful and most significant event.

### **Growth of the Perpetual Education Fund**

Now I wish to speak rather quickly of one or two other matters.

Speaking of Brigham Young has reminded me of the Perpetual Education Fund which we have established. It was only a year ago that I first spoke of this in our general conference. The contributions of generous Latter-day Saints have come in to assure us that this endeavor is now on a solid foundation. We will need more yet, but already it has been demonstrated that vast good will come of this undertaking. Young men and women in the underprivileged areas of the world, young men and women who for the most part are returned missionaries, will be enabled to get good educations that will lift them out of the slough of poverty in which their forebears for generations have struggled. They will marry and go forward with skills that will qualify them to earn well and take their places in society where they can make a substantial contribution. They will likewise grow in the Church, filling positions of responsibility and rearing families who will continue in the faith.

I have time to read only one testimonial. It comes from a young man who has been blessed by this program. He says:

"It is so wonderful that I do not have to just dream anymore about my education or my future. The Lord has cleared the way, and I am doing it!

"I am currently attending a great technical institute in our country, where I am studying to become a computer technician. . . . By going to school, I am discovering my

abilities. The discipline I developed on my mission helps me to succeed. . . . Never before has any young man felt more blessed than I do. The PEF has strengthened my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, more than ever, I feel the responsibility the gospel places upon me to prepare myself to be a better member, a better leader, and a better father. . . .

"My dear mother, who has sacrificed so much, gets so emotional that she cries when she prays at night because of her gratitude to the Lord. . . .

"Now, I envision my town being blessed because of me. I envision the Church with leaders who have financial stability and who can support the Lord's work with all their might, mind, and strength. I see the Church prospering. I am excited to start my own family and teach them that we can be self-sufficient. So I must finish my education. I will then repay the loan quickly to help my fellowmen. . . . I am grateful for the Savior's mercy. He truly sustains us with His love."

And so it goes, my brothers and sisters. As this great work moves across the earth, we are blessing now some 2,400 young people. Others will be blessed.

May the Lord bless you, and each of us, as we rejoice in our opportunity to be a part of this great cause in this wonderful season of the Lord's work is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

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### **President Faust**

President Hinckley has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

Our next speaker will be President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of

the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Following the singing, Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general pres-

ident, will address us. We will then hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by the choir singing "I Am a Child of God."

## President Boyd K. Packer

### A street orphan in Cuzco, Peru

Many years ago in Cuzco, high in the Andes Mountains of Peru, Elder A. Theodore Tuttle and I held a sacrament meeting in a long, narrow room with a door that opened onto the street. It was night and it was very cold.

While Elder Tuttle spoke, a little boy, perhaps six years old, appeared in the doorway. He was naked except for a ragged shirt that went about to his knees.

On our left was a small table with a plate of bread for the sacrament. This ragged street orphan saw the bread and inched slowly along the wall toward it. He was almost to the table when a woman on the aisle saw him. With a stern toss of her head, she banished him out into the night. I groaned within myself.

Later the boy returned. He crept along the wall, glancing from the bread to me. He was near the point where the woman would see him again. I held out my arms, and he came running to me. I held him on my lap.

Then, as something symbolic, I set him in Elder Tuttle's chair. After the closing prayer, much to my sorrow, he darted out into the night.

When I returned home, I told President Spencer W. Kimball about him. He was deeply moved and spoke of it in a conference talk. He told others of it and said to me more than once, "That experience has far greater meaning than you have yet come to know."

I have never forgotten that little street orphan. Many times in South America

I have looked for him in the faces of the people. When he comes back into my mind, others come with him.

### Other suffering children

After World War II on a cold night in a train station in southern Japan, I heard a tap on the train window. There stood a boy wearing the same ragged shirt, a rag tied about a swollen jaw, his head covered with scabies. He held a rusty tin can and a spoon, the symbol of an orphan beggar. As I struggled to open the door to give him money, the train pulled out. I will never forget that hungry little boy standing in the cold, holding up his empty tin can.

There was a sick little first grader in a hospital at a government Indian school with a fever and running nose. I opened a package from his mother, hundreds of miles away on the reservation. Wrapped in a cardboard box with an auto parts label, which no doubt she got from the trading post, were some Navajo fry bread and pieces of mutton—a Christmas present for her little boy.

On the news recently I saw that long, familiar line of refugees. With them, as usual, were the children carrying children. One child was perched atop a massive bundle carried by her mother. As they pushed slowly and silently by, she looked into the camera. That sober little black face and those big black eyes seemed to ask, "Why?"

Children are the past, the present, and the future all blended into one. They

are consummately precious. Every time a child is born, the world is renewed in innocence.

I constantly think about and pray for the children and youth and their parents.

### **Jenny brings love and joy**

Recently I attended a sacrament meeting given by children with special needs. Each was disabled in hearing or sight or mental development. Beside each was a teenager assigned as a companion. They sang and played music for us. Facing us on the front row was a young girl who stood and signed to those behind us who could not hear.

Jenny gave a brief testimony. Then her parents each spoke. They told of the utter agony they had known when they learned that their child would never have a normal life. They told of the endless, everyday trials that followed. When others would stare or laugh, Jenny's brothers put an arm protectively around her. The mother then told us of the love and absolute joy Jenny brought to the family.

Those parents have learned that "after much tribulation . . . cometh the blessing" (D&C 103:12). I saw them bound together by adversity and refined into pure gold—true Latter-day Saints.

They told us Jenny adopts fathers. So when I shook hands with her, I said, "I'm a grandpa."

She looked up at me and said, "Well, I can see why!"

### **Warnings to those who abuse children**

There is nothing in the scriptures, there is nothing in what we publish, there is nothing in what we believe or teach that gives license to parents or anyone else to neglect or abuse or molest our own or anyone else's children.

There is in the scriptures, there is in what we publish, there is in what we believe, there is in what we teach counsel,

commandments, even warnings that we are to protect, to love, to care for, and to "teach [children] to walk in the ways of truth" (Mosiah 4:15). To betray them is utterly unthinkable.

Among the strongest warnings and the severest penalties in the revelations are those relating to little children. Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

### **Children are blameless before God**

In the days of the prophet Mormon, some who did not understand that little children are "blameless before God" (Mosiah 3:21) and are "alive in Christ" (Moroni 8:12) wanted to baptize little children. Mormon said they "[denied] the mercies of Christ, and [set] at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption" (Moroni 8:20).

Mormon sternly rebuked them, saying: "He that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell. . . .

" . . . Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God" (Moroni 8:14, 16).

Only when children reach the age of accountability, set by the Lord at eight years of age (see D&C 68:27), is their baptism essential. Before that age they are innocent.

### **Look after children's needs**

Children should not be ignored or neglected. They absolutely must not be abused or molested. Children must not be abandoned or estranged by divorce. Parents are responsible to provide for their children.

The Lord said, "All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:4).

We are to look after their physical, their spiritual, and their emotional needs. The Book of Mormon teaches, "Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness" (Mosiah 4:14).

Nothing compares with a father who is responsible and in turn teaches his children responsibility. Nothing compares with a mother who is present with them to comfort them and give them assurance. Love, protection, and tenderness are all of consummate worth.

The Lord said, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:40).

All too often, a parent is left alone to raise children. The Lord has a way of strengthening that parent to meet alone what should be the responsibility of two parents. For either parent to deliberately abandon their children is a very grievous mistake.

### **Do not make steps too high for converts**

I think often of another boy. We met him at a seminary graduation in a remote city in Argentina. He was well clothed and well nourished.

The students came down the aisle up to the stand. There were three rather high steps. He could not make the first step because his legs were too short. He was a dwarf.

It was then we noticed marching behind him two stalwart young men who stepped forward, one on either side, and lifted him gracefully to the podium. When the service was over, they lifted him down again and then marched out with him. They were his friends and watched over

him. This boy could not reach the first step without being lifted up by his friends.

Those who come into the Church come as children spiritually. They need someone—some friend—to lift them up.

If we design the steps after baptism to fit only those who have long, strong legs, we ignore what the Lord said in the revelations. The prophets have told us that we "ought to be teachers [and teach that] which be the first principles of the oracles of God; [for they are] such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. . . .

" . . . Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12, 14).

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:2).

In a revelation given in 1830, just before the Church was organized, the Lord cautioned, "They cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish" (D&C 19:22).

We must be careful lest we make that first step too high or design it for those with strong, long legs and leave the others without some friend to lift them up.

### **A deep concern for children**

When some disciples rebuked those who brought little children, "Jesus said, Suffer little children [*suffer* means to permit], and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

When His disciples asked what kind of men they ought to be, Jesus set a little child in their midst (see Matthew 18:2–3). Except we "become as a little child, [we] can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:38).

A deep concern for children and their parents is in my mind and heart and soul.

### **"You held a nation in your lap"**

Over the years I have wondered what President Kimball meant when he reminded me of that street orphan in Cuzco and repeated, "That experience has far greater meaning than you have yet come to know." One day he added, "You held a nation on your lap."

Now in my 78th year, I understand what President Kimball was seeing; I know what he meant. That boy in Cuzco and the one in Japan and the other children about the world profoundly influence what I think and how I feel and what I pray for most earnestly. I constantly think of little children and their parents who struggle to raise them in ever more perilous times.

### **Treasure most how family treats children**

Like my Brethren, I have traveled all over the world. Like my Brethren, I have held positions of trust in education, in business, in government, and in the Church. I have written books and, like them, have received honors, degrees, certificates, plaques. Such honors come with the territory and are undeserved.

Assessing the value of those things, the one thing I treasure more than any of them—more than all of them put together—the thing of most value to me is how our sons and daughters and their

husbands and wives treat their children and how, in turn, our grandchildren treat their little ones.

When it comes to understanding our relationship with our Heavenly Father, the things my wife and I have learned as parents and grandparents that are of most worth knowing, we have learned from our children.

This blessing has come to me as a gift from my wife. The Lord said of such women, "[A wife is given to a man] to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified" (D&C 132:63).

With women such as this to be the mothers of children, we see why the Lord revealed that "great things may be required at the hand of their fathers" (D&C 29:48).

I bear witness that the gospel is true and that the power of it is to bless little children. I pray earnestly that the children and youth and their parents will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that it will be a guide and a protection to them, that it will bear in their hearts the testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Earl C. Tingey**

### **An income and expense journal**

Last Christmas I received a special gift from my mother. She had carefully kept in her possession over these many years a little book I first received from my parents in 1944, when I was 10 years of age.

This is the book. It is a journal in which I was taught to record on a weekly basis my income and expenses.

As an example, my entry for the week of 29 July 1944 records that I started the week with \$24.05 on hand and earned \$7.00 working on our family farm. For expenses, I spent 5 cents for candy, \$3.45 for a purchase, 20 cents for a movie, and \$2.37 for personal clothing. I also invested \$20.00 in a war savings bond and paid 70 cents tithing. I ended the week with \$4.28 on hand.

I remember questioning my father whether my wage of 25 cents an hour might be increased. But remembering that a movie was 20 cents and candy cost only 5 cents, I now realize I was probably overpaid.

As I looked through this journal of more than 50 years ago, I noted that every week during the years 1944 and 1945, I paid tithing of 10 percent of my income for that week. In December 1944 I recorded that I had paid \$12.35 in tithing that year—a full tithing.

This is where and how I learned to pay tithing.

### **Teach the principle of tithing to children**

My wife and I taught our children the importance of setting aside tithing each week as they received an allowance or earned money babysitting or doing special jobs. They put the tithing in a little box. On fast Sunday they gave the tithing to the bishop. They also learned the value of money by saving a goodly portion of the balance of their income for a future mission and education.

Our grandchildren are now following a similar pattern.

Let us teach this principle to our children and be sure they see us paying tithing. President Joseph F. Smith said:

“Our children, as soon as they become old enough to earn means, should be taught to pay their tithing, that their names may be written in the book of the law of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

In my day, in Primary, we learned this little poem:

What is tithing?  
I will tell you every time.  
Ten cents from a dollar  
And a penny from a dime.

### **Tithing in biblical times**

The doctrine of tithing is woven like a tapestry throughout the scriptures. Abra-

ham paid tithing to Melchizedek.<sup>2</sup> The children of Israel were taught to bring their tithes to the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Probably the most quoted scripture on the subject of tithing in the Old Testament is found in Malachi:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . .

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”<sup>4</sup>

The amount of tithing we pay is the most perfect and equitable arrangement of which I know. It is one-tenth of our increase. All, from the poorest to the richest, pay the same percentage. Christ taught that principle in the story of the widow’s mite:

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

“And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

“And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

“For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”<sup>5</sup>

A mite is a very small coin. It was the smallest coin used by the Jews. It was one-sixty-fourth of a Roman silver penny.

### **Law of tithing revealed at Far West**

In this dispensation the Lord has established the law of tithing as the law of revenue of His Church. Without it we could not carry out the eternal purposes of the Lord. It is also a law by which we show our loyalty to the Lord and prove

ourselves worthy of privileges, ordinances, and blessings.

I was recently in Independence, Missouri, and felt a need to drive an hour north to Far West. The Latter-day Saints settled Far West in 1836 as a place of refuge from persecution. Far West became the county seat, with an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 inhabitants. It was the headquarters of the Church for a season. My own ancestors lived there.

As I arrived at Far West and looked about, all I could see was rolling farmlands. There was no city, no roads, and no buildings. There was only a peaceful, grassy temple site containing four cornerstones, surrounded by a modest fence.

In 1838 the Saints were driven from Far West. Joseph Smith and others were arrested and taken to the nearby Liberty Jail. There they languished under the most horrible conditions imaginable for six months. My own ancestors suffered terribly in Far West and almost lost their lives.

As I stood in Far West and visualized what it once was, I opened my scriptures and read section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. This revelation was given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Far West on 8 July 1838, in the midst of these persecutions:

“And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.

“And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

I thought to myself that the law of tithing could not have been received by the members of the Church at a less opportune time than then. But they received it, and the members commenced living this new law at a time when they were losing their possessions and, in some cases, their lives. As I visited Far West, I gained a spiritual testimony of the law of tithing that was stronger and deeper than I had ever before felt.

## **Counsel to new members to pay tithing**

I would like to offer a word of counsel to the many thousands of members joining the Church today as a result of the diligent efforts of our missionaries. Exercise your faith. Pay your tithing. This law may be different from that to which you were accustomed prior to your baptism. But nothing you do as a new convert will more completely prepare you to enjoy the wonderful blessings that await you—even temple blessings—than paying your tithing.

Now, a brief word of counsel to missionaries. Teach tithing to your investigators in such a way that they will gain a testimony of this wonderful principle of the gospel.

## **Paying tithing in difficult circumstances**

Joseph F. Smith's mother was known as “Widow Smith.” She was the widow of Hyrum Smith, who was martyred with the Prophet Joseph. She once rebuked the tithing clerk who stated that because of her poverty, she should not have to pay her tithing. She said: “‘Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold his blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God, but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper, and to be able to provide for my family.’”<sup>7</sup>

Did she prosper? Her son and grandson became Presidents of the Church, and her descendants today include a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and many notable Church leaders.

Speaking of his mother, Joseph F. Smith once said she paid “tithes of her sheep and cattle, the tenth pound of her butter, her tenth chicken, the tenth of her eggs, the tenth pig, the tenth calf, the tenth colt—a tenth of everything she raised.”<sup>8</sup>

I was once teaching the law of tithing to a group of Church leaders in Africa.

One brother said, "Elder Tingey, how can I pay tithing when I have no income?" I inquired and determined that he had a large family of seven or eight children and was unemployed. I asked how he fed his family. He said he had a small garden and raised geese. I asked, "What do the geese do?" He replied, "They lay eggs." I responded, "What if one morning you discovered 10 geese eggs in the nests of your geese?" A light flickered on in his soul. "I could take one egg and give it to my branch president," he answered. He understood, and he could become a full-tithe payer.

### **Paying tithing brings a special peace**

As we pay and teach our children to pay tithing, we develop a family that is deeply rooted in making and keeping temple covenants. The most glorious of all blessings we receive in this life and in the eternities are blessings that come from knowing that our families are sealed together for all eternity. Today some may find that they are denying themselves these privileges by their failure to pay tithing. To those who find themselves in

this situation, my counsel is to exercise your faith, prove the Lord herewith, and pay your tithing.

A special peace that will surpass all understanding will come to you and your family as you pay a full tithing. You will find that all fears concerning finances and care of family will diminish. You will come to know that your Heavenly Father loves you.

I am grateful that my parents taught me to pay tithing. I bear my humble testimony that paying tithing is a true principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 231.
2. See Genesis 14:18–20.
3. See Deuteronomy 12:6.
4. Malachi 3:8, 10.
5. Mark 12:41–44.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 119:3–4.
7. Quoted in *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.
8. *Gospel Doctrine*, 229.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## **Sister Mary Ellen W. Smoot**

### **Relief Society helps develop inner strength**

On behalf of my counselors and the Relief Society general board, we acknowledge the members of the Church worldwide, and specifically the women, who through their faithfulness and devotion, make sacrifices of their time and talents to bless the lives of individuals and families around the world.

In the blessing President Gordon B. Hinckley gave me when I was set apart, he spoke of the service the Relief Society can render. He said, "This is a tremendous organization, perhaps the largest and oldest of its kind in all the world. Its mission is to do good and to help those in

distress and need, to bring about the processes of education, good homemaking, and other skills into the lives of women throughout the world."

We have as our guides the Relief Society declaration; home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and the visiting teaching program. These tools have been carefully evaluated and are now in place to help sisters expand their inner strength through service and unity.

### **Inner strength of Susanna Stone Lloyd**

To demonstrate the kind of inner strength I am talking about, I would like to share the story of Susanna Stone Lloyd,



who at the age of 26 left England in 1856 and traveled to Utah alone. The only member of her family to join the Church, Susanna was a member of the Willie handcart company. Like so many other pioneers, she endured life-threatening hunger, illness, and fatigue.

Upon arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, Susanna borrowed a mirror to make herself more presentable. Despite her best efforts, she recounts: "I shall never forget how I looked. Some of my old friends did not know me."<sup>1</sup> Having sold her own mirror to an Indian for a piece of buffalo meat, she had not spent much time looking at herself. Now she did not recognize her own image. She was a different person, both inside and out. Over the course of rocky ridges and extreme hardship came a deep conviction. Her faith had been tried, and her conversion was concrete. She had been refined in ways that the very best mirror could not reflect. Susanna had prayed for strength and found it—deep within her soul.

### **How to build inner strength**

This is the kind of inner strength I would like to talk about. How do you and I become so converted to the truth, so full of faith, so dependent on God that we are able to meet trials and even be strengthened by them?

It does not take much living to find out that life almost never turns out the way you planned it. Adversity and affliction come to everyone. Do you know anyone who would not like to change something about themselves or their circumstances? And yet I am sure you know many who go forward with faith. You are drawn to those people, inspired by them, and even strengthened by their examples.

Over the past five years I have met with sisters from Africa to Spain who are pioneers in their own right. I have marveled at their inner strength, and I have been inspired by the depth of their tes-

timonies. These are sisters who live the truths that the Relief Society declaration affirms.

The declaration reminds us of who we really are and why we do the things we do. The more we live by its precepts, the more inner strength we will have. We will mirror our beliefs. Fasting, prayer, and scripture study impact our relationship with the Savior. I would like to highlight two more ways we can develop inner strength.

### **Serving others builds inner strength**

When we are truly converted, our focus shifts from self to others. We can find inner strength through service. Nothing would please the adversary more than for us to be distracted by selfish concerns and appetites. But we know better. Service will help us to stay on course.

At women's conferences; at home, family, and personal enrichment meetings; and most importantly in our own homes I have been inspired by your acts of service.

Just a few weeks ago I received a call from the Area President in the Europe Central Area. He said the members and missionaries in Albania and Moldova were so cold, and he wondered if the Relief Society might have any quilts to send their way. Imagine the joy I felt as I visited with Humanitarian Service and discovered that we could donate 1,000 quilts. Within days they were packaged and sent. The mission president wrote, "Members here were touched that other members would be thinking of them." Thank you for your selfless service.

Sisters, take a close look at the suggested topics for home, family, and personal enrichment meeting and find ways to build spiritual strength, develop personal skills, strengthen the home and family, and provide gospel service. By so doing, we will become less preoccupied with our problems and more dependent on God.

## Being united builds inner strength

Another way we can develop inner strength is by striving for unity in our families, stakes, wards, and presidencies. The Lord Himself taught, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>2</sup>

Unity of purpose, thought, and feeling are exalting qualities. When we can put aside our differences and value each other's strengths, great things happen. The Prophet Joseph Smith admonished: "Don't be limited in your views with regard to your neighbor's virtue . . . ; you must enlarge your souls towards each other."<sup>3</sup> Such generosity of spirit invites greater unity.

I have visited stakes and wards that are united. The auxiliary presidencies are supporting each other and coordinating their efforts; they are sustaining their priesthood leaders and together striving to bring families to Christ. As the kingdom of God rolls forth, we must unite our efforts in saving souls.

As a Relief Society general presidency we are grateful for the new emphasis in visiting teaching.<sup>4</sup> The new messages invite sisters to read from their scriptures and from the teachings of the First Presidency and other General Authorities about a principle of the gospel. Sisters are then encouraged to share insights and experiences about how living the principle has blessed their lives.

Sisters, if you will follow this format, you will feel more unity with your companion and with those you teach. You will be strengthened spiritually.

## Great inner strength of women

No matter our circumstances, who of us can afford to waste our life in front of the mirrors of self-pity and discouragement? Yes, as the Apostle Paul admonished, we all need to examine ourselves<sup>5</sup> from time to time. We all need to repent,

recognize our weaknesses, and more fully come unto Christ. Like Susanna, we may have to sell our looking glass in order to cross the plains of pain, sorrow, and discouragement. But as we do, we will discover God-given strengths that we may not have otherwise known.

President Joseph F. Smith spoke with great feeling of the inner strength of pioneer women. He said:

"Death was nothing to them. Hardship was nothing. Cold or rain, or heat, was nothing to them. All they felt and knew and desired was the triumph of the kingdom of God and the truth that the Lord had given to them." And then, with all the sincerity of a prophet of God, he pled, "My soul, where are these women now?"<sup>6</sup>

I am here today to witness to you that such women are all around the world in the Relief Societies of the Church. I am grateful beyond measure for the opportunity that is mine to see these women in our time who have "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth."<sup>7</sup> With all my heart I know that the Lord can "make weak things become strong."<sup>8</sup> I know this is His work and His kingdom. I know that each of us can mirror the Savior by the way we choose to live our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, comp., *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail* (1997), 634.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 228.
4. See General Relief Society Presidency, "For Such a Time as This," *Ensign*, Jan. 2002, 64–66.
5. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 189.
7. Alma 17:2.
8. Ether 12:27.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Disciples left their nets to follow Jesus

They were fishermen before they heard the call. Casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee, Peter and Andrew stopped as Jesus of Nazareth approached, looked into their eyes, and spoke the simple words, "Follow me." Matthew writes that the two fishermen "straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Then the Son of Man approached two other fishermen who were in a ship with their father, mending their nets. Jesus called to them, "and [James and John] immediately left the ship and their father, and followed [the Lord]."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like to have lived in the days of the Savior? If you had been there, would you have heeded His call "Follow me"?

Perhaps a more realistic question might be, "If the Savior were to call you today, would you be just as willing to leave your nets and follow Him?" I am confident that many would.

But for some it may not be such an easy decision. Some have discovered that nets, by their very nature, are sometimes not so easy to leave.

Nets come in many sizes and shapes. The nets that Peter, Andrew, James, and John left were tangible objects—tools that helped them earn a living.

We sometimes think of these four men as modest fishermen who did not sacrifice much when they left their nets to follow the Savior. To the contrary, as Elder James E. Talmage, in *Jesus the Christ*, points out, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were partners in a prosperous business. They "owned their boats and gave employment to other men." According to Elder Talmage, Simon Peter "was well to do in a material way; and when he once spoke of having left all to follow Jesus, the Lord did not deny that Peter's sacrifice of temporal possessions was . . . great."<sup>2</sup>

Later the net of wealth entrapped a rich young man who claimed that he had obeyed all the commandments from his youth. When he asked the Savior what else he should do to have eternal life, the Master said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." When the young man heard that, "he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."<sup>3</sup>

### Modern nets that keep us from Christ

Nets are generally defined as devices for capturing something. In a more narrow but more important sense, we might define a net as anything that entices or prevents us from following the call of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

Nets in this context can be our work, our hobbies, our pleasures, and, above all else, our temptations and sins. In short, a net can be anything that pulls us away from our relationship with our Heavenly Father or from His restored Church.

Let me give you a modern example. A computer can be a useful and indispensable tool. But if we allow it to devour our time with vain, unproductive, and sometimes destructive pursuits, it becomes an entangling net.

Many of us enjoy watching athletic contests, but if we can recite the statistics of our favorite players and at the same time forget birthdays or anniversaries, neglect our families, or ignore the opportunity to render acts of Christlike service, then athletics may also be an entangling net.

Since the days of Adam, mankind has, by the sweat of his brow, earned his daily bread. But when our work consumes us to the point where the spiritual dimensions of life are neglected, work can also be an entangling net.

Some have been ensnared in the net of excessive debt. The net of interest holds

them fast, requiring them to sell their time and energies to meet the demands of creditors. They surrender their freedom, becoming slaves to their own extravagance.

It is impossible to list the many nets that can ensnare us and keep us from following the Savior. But if we are sincere in our desire to follow Him, we must straightway leave the world's entangling nets and follow Him.

### **The dangers of being too busy**

I do not know of another period in the history of the world that has been so filled with such a variety of entangling nets. Our lives are so easily filled with appointments, meetings, and tasks. It is so easy to get caught in a multitude of nets that sometimes even a suggestion of breaking free of them can be threatening and even frightening to us.

Sometimes we feel that the busier we are, the more important we are—as though our busyness defines our worth. Brothers and sisters, we can spend a lifetime whirling about at a feverish pace, checking off list after list of things that in the end really don't matter.

That we do a lot may not be so important. That we focus the energy of our minds, our hearts, and our souls on those things of eternal significance—that is essential.

As the clatter and clamor of life bustle about us, we hear shouting to “come here” and to “go there.” In the midst of the noise and seductive voices that compete for our time and interest, a solitary figure stands on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, calling quietly to us, “Follow me.”

We can easily get our lives out of balance. I remember a few years that were particularly challenging for me. Our family had grown to seven children. I had served as a counselor in the bishopric and was then given the sacred call as bishop of our ward. I was striving to manage our business that required long hours each day. I pay tribute to my wonderful wife,

who always made it possible for me to serve the Lord.

There was simply too much to do in the time available. Instead of sacrificing things of significance, I decided I'd get up earlier, take care of my business, then spend the time required to be a good father and husband and a faithful member of the Church. It wasn't easy. There were mornings when the alarm clock went off that I cracked open an eyelid and glared at it, daring it to keep ringing.

Nevertheless, the Lord was merciful and helped me find the energy and time to do all I had committed to do. Although it was difficult, I have never regretted making the choice to heed the Savior's call and follow Him.

### **Promises to those who follow Jesus**

Think of the debt we owe to Him. Jesus is “the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in [Him], though he were dead, yet shall he live.”<sup>4</sup> There are those who have great wealth, yet they would give their all to add just a few additional years, months, or even days to their mortal lives. What should we be willing to give for eternal life?

There are those who would give all they have to experience peace. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” the Savior taught, “and I will give you rest.”<sup>5</sup> But it is not merely peace that the Savior promises to those who keep His commandments and endure to the end, but eternal life, “which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Because of the Savior, we will live forever. Immortality means that we will never die. But eternal life means to live forever in exalted spheres in companionship with those we cherish, encompassed about by profound love, exquisite joy, and glory.

No amount of money can purchase this exalted state. Eternal life is a gift from a loving Heavenly Father, offered freely

and liberally to all who heed the call of the Man of Galilee.

Unfortunately, many are too entangled in their nets to heed the call. The Savior explained that "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."<sup>7</sup>

### **What it means to follow Jesus**

How do we follow the Savior? By exercising faith. By believing in Him. By believing in our Heavenly Father. By believing that God speaks to man on earth today.

We follow the Savior by repenting of our sins—by experiencing sorrow because of them and forsaking them.

We follow the Savior by entering the waters of baptism and receiving a remission of our sins, by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and allowing that influence to inspire, instruct, guide, and comfort us.

How do we follow the Savior? By obeying Him. He and our Heavenly Father have given us commandments—not to punish or torment us, but to help us come to a fulness of joy, both in this life and for the eternities to come, worlds without end.

In contrast, when we cling to our sins, our pleasures, and sometimes even our perceived obligations, and when we resist the influence of the Holy Ghost and put aside the words of the prophets, we then stand at the shore of our *own* Galilee, nets tightly entangling us. We find ourselves unable to leave them behind and follow the living Christ.

But the Shepherd calls to each of us today. Will we recognize the voice of the Son of God? Will we follow Him?

### **A convert follows faithfully despite trials**

May I extend a word of caution? There are those who feel that if we follow the Savior, our lives will be free from worry, pain, and fear. This is not so! The

Savior Himself was described as "a man of sorrows."<sup>8</sup> Those early disciples who followed the Christ experienced great persecution and trials. The Prophet Joseph Smith was no exception. Nor were the other early Saints of this last dispensation. And it is no different today.

I have had the opportunity to speak with a woman who heard the call of the Savior when she was 18. Her father, who was a high official in another church, became angry with her and forbade her from being baptized. He let her know that if she became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she would be ostracized from the family.

Even though the sacrifice was great, this young woman heeded the call of the Savior and entered the waters of baptism.

Her father could not accept her decision, however, and tried to force her into abandoning her new faith. He and his wife reviled her for her decision to become a member of the Church and demanded that she recant and forsake her new religion.

Even through the rage, the bitterness, and the indignity, her faith remained strong. She endured the verbal and emotional abuse, knowing she had heard the call of the Savior and she would follow Him, whatever the consequence.

Eventually this young woman managed to find a safe haven, a place of refuge with a kind member family far away from the threats and unkindness of her father.

She met a faithful young man, and the two of them were married in the temple, receiving the choice blessings that accompany a temple marriage.

Today she stands among the multitude of those who have sacrificed so much to follow the call of the Savior.

Yes, I do not suggest that the road will be easy. But I will give you my witness that those who, in faith, leave their nets and follow the Savior will experience happiness beyond their ability to comprehend.

## Leave worldly nets and follow Jesus

As I meet the wonderful members of this Church—both young and old—I am encouraged and filled with gratitude for the faithfulness of those who have heard the call of the Savior and have followed Him.

For example, a steelworker follows the Savior. Day after day, over a period of more than three decades, he pulls out his scriptures to read during lunch break as his coworkers chide him. The 70-year-old widow who is confined to her wheelchair and who, to all who visit, cheers their spirits and never fails to tell them of how fortunate she is, follows the Savior. The child who seeks through prayer to commune with the Master of the universe follows the Savior. The wealthy member who gives so generously to the Church and his fellowmen follows the Savior.

As Jesus the Christ stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee 2,000 years ago, so stands He today, issuing the same call He gave to those faithful fishermen and now to all who will hear His voice: "Follow me!"

We have nets that must be tended and nets that must be mended. But when the Master of ocean, earth, and sky calls to us, "Follow me," we should leave the entangling, worldly nets behind and follow His footsteps.

## The glorious restoration of the gospel

My brothers and sisters, I proclaim with joyful voice that the gospel is restored once again! The heavens opened to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he saw and conversed with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Under divine direction and tutelage from celestial beings, eternal truths are restored once again to man!

In our day another great prophet lives, who daily adds his witness to these hallowed truths. President Gordon B. Hinckley stands in his sacred office as the

mouthpiece of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. At his side stand his noble counselors. In addition, he has the sustaining support of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, and the millions of members throughout the world who assist him, each adding his voice to proclaim the glorious Restoration of the gospel that is once again restored unto man!

Jesus the Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life: no [one] cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]."<sup>9</sup> As a special witness of Him, I testify to you this day that the time will come when every man, woman, and child will look into the Savior's loving eyes. On that day we will know with a surety the worth of our decision to straightway follow Him.

That each of us may hear the call of the Master and straightway leave our entangling nets and joyfully follow Him is my earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthew 4:18–22.
2. *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 218.
3. Matthew 19:21–22.
4. John 11:25.
5. Matthew 11:28.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
7. John 10:26–27.
8. Isaiah 53:3; Mosiah 14:3.
9. John 14:6.

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The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

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## President Faust

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Love One Another."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Hidden wedges

In April 1966 at the Church's annual general conference, Elder Spencer W. Kimball gave a memorable address. He quoted an account written by Samuel T. Whitman entitled "Forgotten Wedges." Today I too have chosen to quote from Samuel T. Whitman, followed by examples from my own life. Whitman wrote:

"The ice storm [that winter] wasn't generally destructive. True, a few wires came down, and there was a sudden jump in accidents along the highway. . . . Normally, the big walnut tree could easily have borne the weight that formed on its spreading limbs. It was the iron wedge in its heart that caused the damage.

"The story of the iron wedge began years ago when the white-haired farmer [who now inhabited the property on which it stood] was a lad on his father's homestead. The sawmill had then only recently been moved from the valley, and the settlers were still finding tools and odd pieces of equipment scattered about. . . .

"On this particular day, it was a faller's wedge—wide, flat, and heavy, a foot or more long, and splayed from mighty poundings," which the lad found in the south pasture. A faller's wedge, used to help fell a tree, is inserted in a cut made by a saw and then struck with a sledge hammer to widen the cut.

"Because he was already late for dinner, the lad laid the wedge . . . between the limbs of the young walnut tree his father had planted near the front gate. He would take the wedge to the shed right after dinner, or sometime when he was going that way.

"He truly meant to, but he never did. [The wedge] was there between the limbs, a little tight, when he attained his manhood. It was there, now firmly gripped, when he married and took over his father's farm. It was half grown over on the day the threshing crew ate dinner under the tree. . . . Grown in and healed over, the wedge was still in the tree the winter the ice storm came.

"In the chill silence of that wintry night, . . . one of the three major limbs split away from the trunk and crashed to the ground. This so unbalanced the remainder of the top that it, too, split apart and went down. When the storm was over, not a twig of the once-proud tree remained.

"Early the next morning, the farmer went out to mourn his loss. . . .

"Then, his eyes caught sight of something in the splintered ruin. 'The wedge,' he muttered reproachfully. 'The wedge I found in the south pasture.' A glance told him why the tree had fallen. Growing, edge-up in the trunk, the wedge had prevented the limb fibers from knitting together as they should."<sup>1</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, there are hidden wedges in the lives of many whom we know—yes, perhaps in our own families.

### Wedge keeps a man from the Church

Let me share with you the account of a lifelong friend, now departed from mortality. His name was Leonard. He was not a member of the Church, although his wife and children were. His wife served as a Primary president; his son served an honorable mission. His daughter and his

son married companions in solemn ceremonies and had families of their own.

Everyone who knew Leonard liked him, as did I. He supported his wife and children in their Church assignments. He attended many Church-sponsored events with them. He lived a good and a clean life, even a life of service and kindness. His family, and indeed many others, wondered why Leonard had gone through mortality without the blessings the gospel brings to its members.

In Leonard's advanced years, his health declined. Eventually he was hospitalized, and life was ebbing away. In what turned out to be my last conversation with Leonard, he said, "Tom, I've known you since you were a boy. I feel persuaded to explain to you why I have never joined the Church." He then related an experience of his parents which took place many, many years before. Reluctantly the family had reached a point where they felt it was necessary to sell their farm, and an offer had been received. Then a neighboring farmer asked that the farm be sold to him instead—although at a lesser price—adding, "We've been such close friends. This way, if I own the property, I'll be able to watch over it."

At length Leonard's parents agreed, and the farm was sold. The buyer—even the neighbor—held a responsible position in the Church, and the trust this implied helped persuade the family to sell to him, even though they did not realize as much money from the sale as they would have if they had sold to the first interested buyer.

Not long after the sale was made, the neighbor sold both his own farm and the farm acquired from Leonard's family in a combined parcel which maximized the value and hence the selling price. The long-asked question of why Leonard had never joined the Church had been answered. He always felt that his family had been deceived by the neighbor.

He confided to me following our conversation that he felt a great burden had at last been lifted as he prepared to meet

his Maker. The tragedy is that a hidden wedge had kept Leonard from soaring to greater heights.

### **Forgiveness prevents a hidden wedge**

I am acquainted with a family which came to America from Germany. The English language was difficult for them. They had but little by way of means, but each was blessed with the will to work and with a love of God.

Their third child was born, lived but two months, and then died. Father was a cabinetmaker and fashioned a beautiful casket for the body of his precious child. The day of the funeral was gloomy, thus reflecting the sadness they felt in their loss. As the family walked to the chapel, with Father carrying the tiny casket, a small number of friends had gathered. However, the chapel door was locked. The busy bishop had forgotten the funeral. Attempts to reach him were futile. Not knowing what to do, the father placed the casket under his arm and, with his family beside him, carried it home, walking in a drenching rain.

If the family were of a lesser character, they could have blamed the bishop and harbored ill feelings. When the bishop discovered the tragedy, he visited the family and apologized. With the hurt still evident in his expression, but with tears in his eyes, the father accepted the apology, and the two embraced in a spirit of understanding. No hidden wedge was left to cause further feelings of anger. Love and acceptance prevailed.

The spirit must be freed from tethers so strong and feelings never put to rest, so that the lift of life may give buoyancy to the soul. In many families there are hurt feelings and a reluctance to forgive. It doesn't really matter what the issue was. It cannot and should not be left to injure. Blame keeps wounds open. Only forgiveness heals. George Herbert, an early 17th-century poet, wrote these lines: "He that cannot forgive others breaks the



bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven, for every one has need of forgiveness.”<sup>2</sup>

Beautiful are the words of the Savior as He was about to die upon the cruel cross. Said He, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Forgive yourself to remove a hidden wedge**

There are some who have difficulty forgiving themselves and who dwell on all of their perceived shortcomings. I quite like the account of a religious leader who went to the side of a woman who lay dying, attempting to comfort her—but to no avail. “I am lost,” she said. “I’ve ruined my life and every life around me. There is no hope for me.”

The man noticed a framed picture of a lovely girl on the dresser. “Who is this?” he asked.

The woman brightened. “She is my daughter, the one beautiful thing in my life.”

“And would you help her if she were in trouble or had made a mistake? Would you forgive her? Would you still love her?”

“Of course I would!” cried the woman. “I would do anything for her. Why do you ask such a question?”

“Because I want you to know,” said the man, “that figuratively speaking, Heavenly Father has a picture of you on His dresser. He loves you and will help you. Call upon Him.”

A hidden wedge to her happiness had been removed.

In a day of danger or a time of trial, such knowledge, such hope, such understanding will bring comfort to the troubled mind and grieving heart. The entire message of the New Testament breathes a spirit of awakening to the human soul. Shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope, sorrow yields to joy, and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

The Savior provided assurance of this truth when He taught that even a sparrow shall not fall to the ground unnoticed by our Father. The Savior then concluded the beautiful thought by saying, “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Lay hidden wedges to rest**

Some time ago I read the following Associated Press dispatch, which appeared in the newspaper. An elderly man disclosed at the funeral of his brother, with whom he had shared, from early manhood, a small, one-room cabin near Canisteo, New York, that following a quarrel, they had divided the room in half with a chalk line and neither had crossed the line or spoken a word to the other since that day—62 years before. What a powerful and destructive hidden wedge.

As Alexander Pope wrote, “To err is human; to forgive, divine.”<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes we can take offense so easily. On other occasions we are too stubborn to accept a sincere apology. Who will subordinate ego, pride, and hurt—then step forward with, “I am truly sorry! Let’s be as we once were: friends. Let’s not pass to future generations the grievances, the anger of our time.” Let’s remove any hidden wedges that can do nothing but destroy.

### **The hidden wedge of contention**

Where do hidden wedges originate? Some come from unresolved disputes, which lead to ill feelings, followed by remorse and regret. Others find their beginnings in disappointments, jealousies, arguments, and imagined hurts. We must solve them—lay them to rest and not leave them to canker, fester, and ultimately destroy.

A lovely lady of more than 90 years visited with me one day and unexpectedly recounted several regrets. She mentioned

that many years earlier a neighboring farmer, with whom she and her husband had occasionally disagreed, asked if he could take a shortcut across her property to reach his own acreage. She paused in her narrative and, with a tremor in her voice, said, "Tommy, I didn't let him cross our property but required him to take the long way around—even on foot—to reach his property. I was wrong and I regret it. He's gone now, but oh, I wish I could say to him, 'I'm so sorry.' How I wish I had a second chance."

As I listened to her, the words written by John Greenleaf Whittier came into my mind: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, / The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"<sup>6</sup>

From 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon comes this inspired counsel:

"There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."<sup>7</sup>

### Service removes a hidden wedge

Let me conclude with an account of two men who are heroes to me. Their acts of courage were not performed on a national scale, but rather in a peaceful valley known as Midway, Utah.

Long years ago, Roy Kohler and Grant Remund served together in Church capacities. They were the best of friends. They were tillers of the soil and dairymen. Then a misunderstanding arose which became somewhat of a rift between them.

Later, when Roy Kohler became grievously ill with cancer and had but a limited time to live, my wife, Frances, and I visited Roy and his wife, and I gave him a bless-

ing. As we talked afterward, Brother Kohler said, "Let me tell you about one of the sweetest experiences I have had during my life." He then recounted to me his misunderstanding with Grant Remund and the ensuing estrangement. His comment was, "We were sort of on the outs with each other."

"Then," continued Roy, "I had just put up our hay for the winter to come, when one night, as a result of spontaneous combustion, the hay caught fire, burning the hay, the barn, and everything in it right to the ground. I was devastated," said Roy. "I didn't know what in the world I would do. The night was dark, except for the dying embers of the fire. Then I saw coming toward me from the road, in the direction of Grant Remund's place, the lights of tractors and heavy equipment. As the 'rescue party' turned in our drive and met me amidst my tears, Grant said, 'Roy, you've got quite a mess to clean up. My boys and I are here. Let's get to it.'" Together they plunged to the task at hand. Gone forever was the hidden wedge which had separated them for a short time. They worked throughout the night and into the next day, with many others in the community joining in.

Roy Kohler has passed away, and Grant Remund is getting older. Their sons have served together in the same ward bishopric. I truly treasure the friendship of these two wonderful families.

May we ever be exemplary in our homes and faithful in keeping all of the commandments, that we may harbor no hidden wedges but rather remember the Savior's admonition: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>8</sup>

This is my plea and my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Quoted in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 70-71.
2. Quoted in Frank S. Mead, ed., *12,000 Religious Quotations* (1989), 147.

3. Luke 23:34.
4. Matthew 10:31.
5. *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), part 2, line 525.
6. "Maud Muller," lines 107–8; in *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (1892), 48.

7. 3 Nephi 11:28–30.
8. John 13:35.

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The choir sang "Love One Another."  
Elder Robert C. Oaks offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes. Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes, under the direction of Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jer-

ald F. Simon, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Press Forward, Saints." At the conclusion of the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."  
Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Wesley L. Jones, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2001.

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The choir sang "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

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## The Sustaining of Church Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Gerald N. Lund and William R. Walker as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release Kay H. Christensen, Clayton S. Huber, David López, Hyde M. Merrill, Adelson de Paula Parrella, and R. Gordon Porter as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: D. Allen Andersen, David S. Baxter, C. Elmer Black Jr., G. Lynn Brenchley, Ildefonso de Castro Deus Neto, Clayton M. Christensen, Ernesto A. Da Silva, Hector A. Dávalos, James Dunlop, James M. Dunn, I. Lee Ence, Carlos R. Fernandez, John R. Gibson, Stephen W. Hansen, Emmanuel A. Kissi, B. Renato Maldonado, Jeffrey J. Marchant, Gerald A. Mead, Hyae-Kee Min, Rodrigo Myrrha, Masayuki Nakano, Yasuo Niiyama, Carlos L. Pedraja, Carlos A. Perez, D. Chad Richardson, Maury W. Schooff, M. Gonzalo Sepúlveda, T. LaMar Sleight, John C. Taggart, Anthony R. Temple. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks and sincere appreciation Mary Ellen Wood Smoot, Virginia Urry Jensen, and Sheri L. Dew as the Relief Society general presidency. We also release all members of the Relief Society general board. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Bonnie Rae Dansie Parkin as the new general president of the Relief Society, with Kathleen Hurst Hughes as first counselor and Anne Clark Pingree as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

## Church Auditing Department Report

**Wesley L. Jones**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an auditing department that performs its work independently from all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, and other qualified, credentialed professionals.

Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments and operations worldwide. The Church Auditing Department has access to all records, personnel, properties, and systems needed to audit Church contributions, expenditures, and resources. Risk is the primary factor guiding the selection and performance of audits.

Expenditures of Church funds in 2001 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of Tithes. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed by revelation. Expenditures are controlled through the Budget and Finance Departments under

direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees. Administration of approved budgets was audited and reported.

Based upon performance of our audits, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received and funds expended during the year ended December 31, 2001, have been managed in accordance with approved budget guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

The financial activities of Church-affiliated organizations, which are operated separately from the Church, were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2001. These organizations include Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries and Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education. However, financial activities in these organizations were audited by independent public accounting firms. In addition, the Church Auditing Department did verify that appropriate reporting of these audit results occurred with each organization's audit committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
Auditing Department  
Wesley L. Jones  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report

**F. Michael Watson**

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2001:

### Church units

Stakes	2,607
Districts	618
Missions	333

Wards and branches . . . . . 26,084

### Church membership

Total membership	11,394,522
Increase in children of record	
during 2001	69,522
Converts baptized during 2001	292,612

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	60,850
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## Temples

Temples dedicated during 2001 . . . . . 5  
(Montevideo Uruguay, Winter Quarters  
Nebraska, Guadalajara México, Perth  
Australia, Columbia River Washington)

Temples in operation . . . . . 107

## Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Loren C. Dunn*, an emeritus General Authority and president of the Boston Massachusetts Temple at the time of his passing; *Elder Merlyn R. Lybbert*, a former member of the Seventy; *Elder*

*George R. Hill III*, a former member of the Seventy; *Phyllis Nielsen Reeve*, wife of Rex C. Reeve Sr., an emeritus General Authority; *Avanelle Richards Osborn*, wife of Spencer H. Osborn, a former member of the Seventy; *Naomi Ward Randall*, a former counselor in the Primary general presidency and author of the words of the hymn "I Am a Child of God."

## President Faust

We shall now hear from Elders Richard G. Scott and Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder R. Conrad Schultz of the Seventy.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Insights from Peter about true conversion

Each of us has observed how some individuals go through life consistently doing the right things. They seem happy, even enthusiastic about life. When difficult choices are to be made, they seem to invariably make the right ones, even though there were enticing alternatives available to them. We know that they are subject to temptation, but they seem oblivious to it. Likewise, we have observed how others are not so valiant in the decisions they make. In a powerfully spiritual environment, they resolve to do better, to change their course of life, to set aside debilitating habits. They are very sincere in their determination to change, yet they are soon back doing the same things they resolved to abandon.

What is it that makes the difference in the lives of these two groups? How can you consistently make the right choices? The scriptures give us insight. Consider enthusiastic, impetuous Peter. For three years he had served as an Apostle beside the Master, observing miracles and hearing transforming teachings and private explanations of parables. With James and

John, he experienced the glorious Transfiguration of Jesus Christ with the accompanying visitations of Moses and Elijah.<sup>1</sup> Yet with all of this, the Savior could see that Peter still lacked consistency. The Master knew him very well, as He does each of us. In the Bible we read:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you . . .

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren.

"And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."<sup>2</sup>

Certainly these were not, from the perspective of Peter, idle words. He sincerely meant what he said but would act otherwise.

Later, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus prophesied to His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Peter again responded, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then the Master soberly prophesied, "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before

the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice," to which Peter responded more vehemently, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise."<sup>3</sup>

For me, one of the most poignant passages of scripture describes what then occurred. It is a sobering reminder to each of us that knowing to do right, even ardently desiring to do right, is not enough. It is often very hard to actually do what we clearly know we should do. We read:

"But a certain maid beheld [Peter] . . . and said, This man was also with him. And he denied . . . , saying, Woman, I know him not. . . . Another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. . . . Another confidently affirmed, . . . Of a truth this fellow also was with him: . . . And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, . . . and . . . went out, and wept bitterly."<sup>4</sup>

As painful as that confirmation of prophecy must have been for Peter, his life began to change forever. He became that unwavering, rock-solid servant essential to the plan of the Father after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Savior.

This tender passage also illustrates how very much the Savior loved Peter. Although He was in the midst of an overpowering challenge to His own life, with all the weight of what was to transpire upon His shoulders, yet He turned and looked at Peter—the love of a teacher transmitted to a beloved student, giving courage and enlightenment in time of need. Thereafter Peter rose to the full stature of his calling. He taught with power and unshakable testimony despite threats, imprisonment, and beatings. He was truly converted.

#### What it means to be truly converted

Sometimes the word *converted* is used to describe when a sincere individual de-

cides to be baptized. However, when properly used, *conversion* means far more than that, for the new convert as well as the long-term member. With characteristic doctrinal clarity and precision, President Marion G. Romney explained conversion:

"Converted means to turn from one belief or course of action to another. Conversion is a spiritual and moral change. *Converted* implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings but also a motivating faith in him and his gospel. A faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one's understanding of life's meaning and in his allegiance to God in interest, in thought, and in conduct. In one who is really wholly converted, desire for things contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died. And substituted therefore is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments."<sup>5</sup>

#### How to become truly converted

To be converted, you must remember to apply diligently in your life the key words "a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments." Your happiness now and forever is conditioned on your degree of conversion and the transformation that it brings to your life. How then can you become truly converted? President Romney describes the steps you must follow:

"Membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith. That is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion is the fruit or the reward for repentance and obedience."<sup>6</sup>

Stated simply, true conversion is the fruit of *faith*, *repentance*, and *consistent obedience*. *Faith* comes by hearing the word of God<sup>7</sup> and responding to it. You

will receive from the Holy Ghost a confirming witness of things you accept on *faith* by willingly doing them.<sup>8</sup> You will be led to *repent* of errors resulting from wrong things done or right things not done. As a consequence, your capacity to *consistently obey* will be strengthened. This cycle of *faith*, *repentance*, and *consistent obedience* will lead you to greater conversion with its attendant blessings. True conversion will strengthen your capacity to do what you know you should do, when you should do it, regardless of the circumstances.

### Conversion and the parable of the sower

The parable of the sower taught by Jesus is generally considered to describe how the word of the Lord is received by different individuals as it is preached. Consider for a moment how the same parable may apply to you in different circumstances in your life, as you face challenges or come under strong influences. The word, or teachings of the Savior, can come to you in many ways: as you observe others, or through your own prayer or pondering the scriptures, or through the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As I repeat the explanation that Jesus gave His disciples of the parable of the sower, mentally examine your life. See if there are periods when correct teachings find in you conditions unsuitable to receive them and consequently the promised fruits of happiness, peace, and progress are lost.

"The sower soweth the word.

"[Some are sown] by the way side, . . . but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Could that happen to you, in the wrong environment, with the wrong friendships?

"[Some] are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

"And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when

. . . persecution ariseth . . . , immediately they are offended."

Have you ever been in a circumstance when someone proposed something inappropriate and you did nothing to resist it?

"[Some] are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

"And the cares of this world . . . and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Have there been times when you wanted something so badly that you justified an exception to your standards?

"[Some] are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."<sup>9</sup>

I know this is the way you want to live your life. How completely you willingly embrace the teachings of the Savior determines how much fruit, as blessings, you will harvest in your life. This parable illustrates that the degree to which you willingly obey those things you know you should do, resisting the rationalization to do otherwise, will determine how truly converted you are and, therefore, how fully the Lord can bless you.

### Blessings of true conversion

True conversion yields the fruit of enduring happiness that can be enjoyed even when the world is in turmoil and most are anything but happy. Of a group of individuals in difficulty, the Book of Mormon teaches, "They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God."<sup>10</sup>

President Hinckley has declared that it is true conversion that makes the difference.<sup>11</sup>

To receive the blessings promised from true conversion, make the changes



that you know are needed in your life now. The Savior said:

"Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

"... If ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life."<sup>12</sup>

I bear testimony that as you pray for guidance, the Holy Ghost will help identify the personal changes you need to make for full conversion. The Lord can then bless you more abundantly. Your *faith* in Him will be fortified, your capacity to *repent* will increase, and your power to *consistently obey* will be reinforced. The Savior lives. He loves you. As you do your best, He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthew 17:1-3; see also 1 Kings 17:1; Doctrine and Covenants 110:13.
2. Luke 22:31-33; italics added.
3. See Mark 14:27, 29-31.
4. Luke 22:56-62.
5. In Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8.
6. In Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 9.
7. See Romans 10:17; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 99.
8. See Ether 12:6.
9. Mark 4:14-20.
10. Helaman 3:35.
11. See Regional representatives' seminar, 6 Apr. 1984, quoted by W. Mack Lawrence, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 103; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 75.
12. 3 Nephi 9:13-14.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Our promise at baptism to be a friend

Each year, hundreds of thousands of the children of our Heavenly Father come into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For most it requires a great change in their lives. All of them have made a sacred covenant with great promises and with a solemn pledge to endure. That covenant is so important that our Heavenly Father described the blessing and the challenge to the prophet Nephi:

"And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

"And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved."<sup>1</sup>

The Savior warns that if we start along the path and go far enough and then fail and deny Him, it would have been better if we had never begun.<sup>2</sup>

I think of that each time I visit with new members of the Church. I get that opportunity often, across the world. I see their trusting faces, and often they tell me about some trial of their faith, and then, with urgency in their voices, they whisper, "Please pray for me." At those moments I feel again the weight of the charge to each of us from the Lord's living prophet. It is to keep the promise we made in the waters of baptism "to bear one another's burdens."<sup>3</sup> It is to be a friend.

### Friendship brings young man to the gospel

These words of President Hinckley energize me: "I hope, I pray, I plead with you, every one of you, to embrace every new member of the Church. Make a friend of him or her. Hold on to them."<sup>4</sup>

President Hinckley can't be there as a friend for every new member. But you can be there for at least one. All it takes is to feel something of what they feel and something of what the Savior feels for

them. Try to feel the heart of a young man, Nkosiyo Eddie Lupahla, in Africa, writing about his friend.

"Two and a half years prior to my joining the Church in 1999, my good friend, Mbuti Yona, looked me up. We had been friends through grades 5 to 12, then [were] separated when we attended different [schools].

"Mbuti was baptized in April 1999, and four weeks later he visited me at home and introduced the gospel to me. Regardless of the rumors about the Church, I was impressed by the 'fellow Saints' who gave me a warm welcome on my first visit. It was this same Sunday that my friend introduced me to the missionaries. Arrangements were made to be taught. My friend was there for every discussion, and he kept inviting me to the activities. I really enjoyed being around people with the same values, interests, standards, and goals. It was during this same time period that I began attending institute [of religion]. It all seemed very natural: Thursday nights [5:30]—missionary discussion, followed by institute.

"I learned a lot in institute and especially enjoyed our class about how to achieve a celestial marriage. The first semester ended in May, shortly after I began attending, and I felt cheated. But I was fortunate enough to catch the second-semester class, Teachings of the Living Prophets. While in institute, I bought myself the four standard works and continued to learn and grow in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. I was baptized September 17, 1999, by another friend I had made while attending institute.

"I am thankful for the institute program. It has not only shaped me, but it has also helped me qualify to become a missionary, which mission I started preparing for five months after my baptism. I have been blessed with many opportunities to serve and to teach prior to my mission.

"I am thankful for my friend. I hope he realizes what he has done for me. We have both served missions, I to South Africa Durban, he to South Africa Cape Town. All it takes is a friend to bring such a mighty change in one's life."<sup>5</sup>

Now, there seems to be nothing miraculous in that story. But there is a miracle of wisdom beyond human capacity.

Perhaps because Mbuti had walked the path himself or perhaps by revelation, he knew what his friend would have to do to endure. And so he knew how to lift and help.

He introduced his friend to the missionaries. He saw that his friend was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. He took his friend, even before baptism, to where he would study the scriptures and thus be nurtured by the good word of God. Even before baptism he helped his friend discover this promise: "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."<sup>6</sup> The words must have told him to buy scriptures, which he did.

### **Holy Ghost gives direction, brings change**

At baptism, Brother Lupahla received the gift of the Holy Ghost to serve as his constant companion as long as he invited it and lived worthy of it. That assured him of another promise: "For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do."<sup>7</sup> The Holy Ghost must have told him to begin to prepare for a mission, which he did.

We do not know which friends went with him to his sacrament meetings both before and after baptism, but some must have greeted him warmly, as they did on his first visit. There he renewed his covenant to always remember the Savior, to keep His commandments, and to receive

again the promise of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We don't know what part his friends had in his calls to serve and to speak. But we can be sure that they thanked him and told him when they felt the Spirit in his service and in his teaching.

We can know something of his private life. Remember that he wrote that he continued to learn. He wrote that he grew in the Church line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. He said that he had been shaped by his experiences in the Church Educational System institute. We know from the scriptures what caused those changes in him. He had to be praying with faith in the Savior. He was receiving testimony and directions through the Spirit. And then he was not only doing what he was inspired to do but he was asking God to let the Atonement work in his life.

Nephi, describing that miracle of change and what brings it, said this:

"And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.

"But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul."<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Ghost is a comforter and a guide. But it is also a cleansing agent. That is why service in the kingdom is so crucial to enduring. When we are called to serve, we can pray for the Holy Ghost to be our companion with assurance it will come. When we ask in faith, a change can come in our natures both for the welfare of our souls and to strengthen us for the tests we all must face.

## **New members must choose to live gospel**

There are limits on what friends can do to help the ones who must endure. It is the new members who must pray. It is they who must rely on the strength they will receive in answers to their prayers. They must choose for themselves in faith to be baptized, trusting in their perfect friend, the Savior. They must choose in faith in Him to repent, to be humble and contrite.

They must choose to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The words of confirmation into the Church are an invitation: "Receive the Holy Ghost." And that choice must be made not once, but every day, every hour, every minute. Even when the Holy Ghost comes and inspires them what they should do, doing it or not is a choice. Even when they read the scriptures regularly, it takes a choice to "feast upon the words of Christ." And even the feast is not nourishing without a choice to do what the words of Christ tell them to do. With faith and obedience practiced long enough, the Holy Ghost becomes a constant companion, our natures change, and endurance becomes certain.

## **How true friends help new members**

The member must make the choices, but the true friend is vital. There are important ways for us to share the new member's burden that it may be bearable. We can love, listen, show, and testify.

### *Love as Christ loves*

First, we must love them. That is what the Savior does. We can do it with Him and for Him. He showed us the way in His mortal ministry. He taught by precept and example that we are to love His disciples.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."<sup>9</sup>

The Savior watches over the struggling member as a friend. He laid down His life for all of us. He loves us and will grant us, if we are faithful, the gift of feeling a part of His love for them. I have at times been blessed by the Holy Ghost to sense the Savior's love for a struggling new member. I know for myself that is possible.

### *Listen with understanding*

Second, we must listen to the new member with understanding and empathy. That also will take spiritual gifts, since our experience will rarely parallel theirs. It will not be enough to say, "I understand how you feel," unless we do. But the Savior does. He is prepared to help you be a friend who understands even those you have just met, if you ask in faith. Before He was born, prophets knew what He would do to be able to help you be a friend for Him:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."<sup>10</sup>

### *Set an example*

Third, we must be an example for the new member. We can feast upon the word of God. We can ask for and live for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We

can be obedient out of our faith in Jesus Christ. And in time we can become an example of a disciple who is born again through the Atonement. It may be gradual. It may be hard for us to discern in ourselves. But it will be real. And it will give hope to the new member and to all those we befriend on the path to eternal life.

### *Testify of gospel truths*

Fourth, we must testify of the truth to the new member. It must be sincere, and it is best when it is simple. It is most helpful when it is about the reality and mission of the Savior, about our Heavenly Father's love, and of the gifts and companionship of the Holy Ghost. And it is essential to testify that the Father and the Son appeared to the young Joseph Smith and that the full gospel and the true Church have been restored by heavenly messengers. The Holy Ghost will confirm those simple declarations as truth.

The new member will need that confirmation again and again, even when we are not there to testify. Should they choose to reject the companionship of the Holy Ghost, he or she will not endure. But that is true for all of us, wherever we are and however faithful we have been. All of us will be tested. And all of us need true friends to love us, to listen to us, to show us the way, and to testify of truth to us so that we may retain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. You must be such a true friend.

### *True friends may bless generations*

I can still remember, as if it were today, friends who touched my life for good long ago. They are gone, but the memory of their love, example, faith, and testimony still lifts me. And your friendship to even one new member may, in this life and in the next, cause hundreds or even thousands of their ancestors and their descendants to call you blessed.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. He lives. He loves you, and He loves those whom you must serve and who will become your true friends forever.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 31:15–16.
2. See 2 Nephi 31:14; Doctrine and Covenants 40:1–3; 41:5–6.

3. Mosiah 18:8.
4. Meeting, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 2 Aug. 1998.
5. Personal correspondence.
6. 2 Nephi 32:3.
7. 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 32:8–9.
9. John 15:12–15.
10. Alma 7:11–12.

## Elder R. Conrad Schultz

### Sneaker waves

In this world in which we live, things are not always what they appear to be. We sometimes are unaware of the powerful forces pulling on us. Appearances can be very deceptive.

A few years ago I had an experience with deceptive appearances where the results could have been tragic. My wife's cousin and family were visiting us from Utah. It was a calm summer day on the Oregon coast, and we were fishing in the ocean. It was pleasant, and we were having a good time catching salmon, when for some reason I turned around to see a huge eight-foot wave bearing down upon us. I only had time to shout a warning before the wave hit us broadside. Somehow the boat stayed upright, but Gary, our cousin, was thrown overboard. We were all wearing life jackets and with some difficulty maneuvered the boat, half filled with water, to where he was floating and pulled him aboard.

We had been hit by what is called a sneaker wave. It doesn't happen often, and there is no way to predict an occurrence. Later we found that up and down the Oregon-Washington coast, five people had drowned that day in three separate boating accidents. All were caused by the same sneaker wave, which for no apparent reason had welled up off the ocean surface. At the time we went out

over the bar, the ocean was flat and calm and gave no sign of any danger. But the ocean turned out to be very deceptive and not at all what it appeared to be.

As we make our way through this life's journey, we must continually be on guard and watch for those things which are deceptive and not what they appear to be. If we are not careful, the sneaker waves in life can be as deadly as those in the ocean.

### **"Faith obedience" is not blind obedience**

One of the sneaky ploys of the adversary is to have us believe that unquestioning obedience to the principles and commandments of God is blind obedience. His goal is to have us believe that we should be following our own worldly ways and selfish ambitions. This he does by persuading us that "blindly" following the prophets and obeying the commandments is not thinking for ourselves. He teaches that it is not intelligent to do something just because we are told to do so by a living prophet or by prophets who speak to us from the scriptures.

Our unquestioning obedience to the Lord's commandments is not blind obedience. President Boyd K. Packer in the April conference of 1983 taught us about this:

"Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedi-

ent. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God. . . . We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 89–90; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 66).

We might call this "faith obedience." With faith, Abraham was obedient in preparing Isaac for sacrifice; with faith, Nephi was obedient in obtaining the brass plates; with faith, a little child obediently jumps from a height into the strong arms of his father. "Faith obedience" is a matter of trust. The question is simple: Do we trust our Heavenly Father? Do we trust our prophets?

### **Danger of relying on world's knowledge**

Another of the adversary's deceptions is to have us believe that the wisdom and the learning of the world is the only source of knowledge we should follow. The prophet Nephi's brother Jacob understood the adversary's plan and warned us about it:

"O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish" (2 Nephi 9:28).

Jacob did not say that we should not be learned. He went on to tell us that it is good to be learned, provided we hearken to the counsels of God (see 2 Nephi 9:29).

### **Counsel against selective obedience**

Some come to believe that you may pick and choose which of God's commandments to follow. They conveniently label many commandments as little things that can be put off and that don't appear to be life threatening or too important—things like saying our prayers, honoring the Sab-

bath, reading the scriptures, paying our tithing, attending our meetings—and the list goes on.

Our Heavenly Father communicates in a very clear way to His children. In the teachings of the gospel, there is no uncertain sound of which the Apostle Paul speaks (see 1 Corinthians 14:8). There is no question about the meaning of what is being said or of feelings prompted by the Spirit. We have not been left alone. We have the scriptures, the prophets, loving parents, and leaders.

### **Heed prophets to avoid deception**

Why do we sometimes stray? Why do we let ourselves be influenced by the deception of the adversary? The solution to his deception is simple in its answer, but sometimes it is difficult in its application. President Harold B. Lee in the October conference of 1970 spoke of the Lord, the adversary, and the solution to the adversary's power of deception:

"We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation. . . . The power of Satan will increase; we see it . . . on every hand. . . . We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet. . . . There will be some things that take patience and faith" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 126).

Then President Lee added a warning when he went on to say that we may not always like what comes from the authority of the Church, because it may conflict with our personal views or interfere with some of our social life. However, if we will listen to and do these things as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, we will not be deceived and great blessings will be ours.

### **No doctrine more critical than obedience**

It brings us back to obedience. It will always be so. It's part of the plan of eternal happiness. I know of no doctrine that

is more critical to our well-being in this life and the next. All scriptures teach obedience, and no apostle or prophet has ever lived who has not taught the principle of obedience.

Sometimes it is necessary to be obedient even when we do not understand the reason for the law. It takes faith to be obedient. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in teaching obedience, said that whatever God requires is right, though we may not know the reason until much later (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 256).

I am grateful that we had on our life jackets that summer day on the ocean. I am thankful we were able to avoid the tragedy that came to others from that sneaker wave. It is my prayer that we will continue to wear our life jackets of obedience in order to avoid the tragedy that will surely come if we are deceived and follow the enticings of the adversary.

I witness to you that our Father in Heaven lives, that He loves us, and that by being unquestioningly obedient to His commandments, we can once again dwell with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." Following the singing, Elder Robert R. Steuer of the Seventy will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

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## Elder Robert R. Steuer

### Being teachable

True disciples of the Master are teachable. In just a few words, Abraham gives us much insight into why he was so greatly blessed. He lived a life "desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God."<sup>1</sup> "Desiring to receive instructions" is more than a willingness to listen. When our desire to receive instruction is a greater force than our comfort in remaining as we are, we become teachable.

President Brigham Young taught that our "first and foremost duty [is] to seek the Lord until we open the path of communication from God to our own soul."<sup>2</sup> Shortly after his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared in a dream to Brigham Young and instructed him:

"Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to keep the spirit of

the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the Kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

### Be willing to receive instruction

How do we ignite this power of divine instruction in our lives? First, we need to start with a willingness to be instructed. While many naturally hunger and thirst after righteousness, others may be compelled to be humble.<sup>4</sup> Some of us, rather than follow instructions or change ourselves, would simply like to change the rules.

Naaman certainly wanted to be rid of his leprous flesh but went away in a rage when told by the prophet's messenger to simply wash seven times in the river Jordan. It was inconvenient, a little thing,

and he felt that the rivers in his land were better than the Jordan. But his leprosy was cured as he listened to his servants, changed his mind, and did "according to the saying of the man of God."<sup>5</sup> He was dramatically shown that there was a prophet and a God in Israel. We too must realize that God has governing laws<sup>6</sup> and that His wisdom is greater than our own. Even Moses observed, after seeing God's majesty and workmanship, "Man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed."<sup>7</sup>

### **Labor to receive instruction**

Second, we need to put ourselves into a proper frame of mind and heart. This comes by prayerful pondering and laboring in the Spirit.<sup>8</sup> This labor is real labor. It includes the very active steps of seeking, hearkening, and studying the scriptures. When humbled and stripped of pride, our hearts are softened and we can focus on heavenly counsel and instruction. Laman's father, the powerful Lamanite king, made just that change in focus, even prostrating himself to the earth, demonstrating his great commitment to know God. He declared, "I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day."<sup>9</sup>

### **Obey the instruction received**

Third, we must be obedient to the instruction we receive. Alma said, "Experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith."<sup>10</sup> Nephi simply said, "I will go and do."<sup>11</sup> What a wonderful attitude of submission and obedience as he accepted his father's counsel in getting the brass plates and in being told where to hunt, and the Lord's counsel in building a ship.<sup>12</sup> In each case he proceeded with trust, moving forward, "not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" or the outcome.<sup>13</sup> But since we are free agents, life can sometimes be a difficult journey of applying our hearts and minds

to the truths of God. Nevertheless, as President Thomas S. Monson said, "The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors."<sup>14</sup>

Becoming teachable is a process of learning line upon line. In this process we convert thoughts and feelings into actions. But what a reward for this exercise of our faith as we open the path of communication with the Lord. The Lord said, "Blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom."<sup>15</sup> And He also said, "Every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father."<sup>16</sup>

Some years ago I remember asking my father-in-law, a seasoned bishop, about a three-by-five-inch card he always carried in his shirt pocket. He replied that at times he felt impressions or promptings. He then liked to pull out that card and write down those feelings whenever they came. And then he tried to act upon them as quickly as possible. It is humbling to consider that the still, small voice is always there for us, teaching us what to do and where to go. The Lord tells us that when the promptings are heeded, often more are given. If we do not follow them, the promptings eventually diminish.

### **Being teachable draws us to Christ**

As a result of being teachable, we gain an even greater testimony of our Heavenly Father's care for us. We gain the security and certainty that our course in life is according to His will.<sup>17</sup> We even have reasons to be good, reasons to be moral, and reasons to change our behavior. By being teachable, we activate the full force and blessings of the Atonement in our lives. We become sensitive to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit so that the righteous principles taught by the prophets and the truths from the earth can place Christ deeply into our lives.<sup>18</sup> We become His true disciples.



It is by loving these truths with all our hearts that an affinity develops between us and the Source of truth itself, "for intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; [and] virtue loveth virtue."<sup>19</sup> Hence, we shall discover that the things we value and appreciate the most are those that we personally learned *from* the Lord.

I testify that through the Prophet Joseph Smith we have received countless revelations of truth, bearing testimony of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When we are teachable, we will more clearly see, hear, and adhere to those revelations continuing even today through our living apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Abraham 1:2.

2. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 41.
3. Quoted by Brigham Young, in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 41.
4. See Matthew 5:6; Alma 32:13.
5. See 2 Kings 5:1–14.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:30.
7. Moses 1:10.
8. See Alma 17:5.
9. See Alma 22:17–18.
10. Alma 32:27.
11. 1 Nephi 3:7.
12. See 1 Nephi 3:4; 16:23–32; 17:8–11.
13. 1 Nephi 4:6.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 64; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 49.
15. 2 Nephi 28:30.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:47.
17. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
18. See Moses 7:62.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Becoming full participants in the Church

Some years ago I enjoyed a newspaper cartoon that showed a clergyman in conversation with a hippie-dressed couple astride a motorcycle. "We *are* church goers," one was saying to the clergyman. "We've been going for years . . . we just haven't got there yet."<sup>1</sup>

Many of our extended family and friends haven't yet gotten to church either. They may attend sporadically, but they are not yet enjoying the full blessings of Church participation and service. Others may attend regularly but refrain from commitments and from seeking the personal spiritual rebirth that comes from yielding our hearts to God. Both kinds are missing some unique blessings in this life. And both are in jeopardy of missing the most glorious blessings in the life to come.

Paul taught that the Lord gave prophets and apostles for "the perfecting of the saints, . . . the work of the ministry, [and]

the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Persons who are not fully participating in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and also seeking a personal spiritual conversion are missing out on experiences that are essential under the divinely established great plan of happiness. The teachings and the work of the Church are essential to bring to pass the eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39).

I pray that many within the sound of my voice will have a spiritual witness of the importance of the Church's mission to edify and exalt the children of God. I pray especially that some who are not yet enjoying the blessings of full Church participation and commitment will seek and obtain that witness and act upon it.

### Some have mistaken expectations

About a decade ago, while I was at a stake conference in the United States, I was introduced to a member who had not

participated in the Church for many years. "Why should I return to Church activity?" this member asked me. Considering all the Savior has done for us, I replied it should be easy to offer something in service to Him and our fellowmen. My questioner considered that idea for a moment and then voiced this astonishing reply: "What's He done for me?"

This astonishing answer moved me to ponder what people expect to receive from Jesus Christ, from His gospel, and from participating in His Church. I thought of some others who said they stopped going to Church because the Church was "not meeting their needs." Which needs could they be expecting the Church to meet? If they are simply seeking a satisfying social experience, they might be disappointed in a particular ward or branch and seek other associations. There are satisfying social experiences in many organizations. If they are simply seeking help to learn the gospel, they could pursue that goal through available literature. But are these the principal purposes of the Church? Is this all we are to receive from the gospel of Jesus Christ?

### **Seek ways to *give*, not only to *get***

Someone has said that what we get depends on what we seek. Persons who attend church solely in order to *get* something of a temporal nature may be disappointed. The Apostle Paul wrote disparagingly of persons who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly" (Romans 16:18). Persons who attend church in order to *give* to their fellowmen and *serve* the Lord will rarely be disappointed. The Savior promised that "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).

The Church gives us opportunities to serve the Lord and our fellowmen. If given in the right way and for the right reasons, that service will reward us beyond anything we have given. Millions serve unselfishly and effectively as officers or teach-

ers in Church organizations, and those who do experience the conversion described by the prophet who pleaded with us to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

### **Blessings from Church participation**

Throughout my life I have been blessed by my membership and participation in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is impossible to describe all the ways the Church has blessed my life and the lives of those I love. But I will give a few examples, in the hope that this will add personal persuasion to the principles described.

#### *Blessings of the sacrament and the Sabbath*

Attendance at church each week provides the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as the Lord has commanded us (see D&C 59:9). If we act with the right preparation and attitude, partaking of the sacrament renews the cleansing effect of our baptism and qualifies us for the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. A mission of that Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is to testify of the Father and the Son and to lead us into truth (see John 14:26; 2 Nephi 31:18). Testimony and truth, which are essential to our personal conversion, are the choice harvest of this weekly renewing of our covenants. In the day-to-day decisions of my life and in my personal spiritual growth, I have enjoyed the fulfillment of that promise.

I am sorry when any Latter-day Saint does not understand the precious blessing that comes to those who keep the commandment to offer up their sacraments upon each Sabbath day. What is there in life—on the lakes or streams, in places of commercial recreation, or at home reading the Sunday paper—that can provide anything comparable to these blessings? No recreational pleasure can equal the cleansing renewal and the spiritual guidance and growth God has promised those

who faithfully partake of the sacrament and honor Him each Sabbath day. I give thanks for the fulfillment of those promises in my life and affirm their availability to all.

### *Blessings of gospel doctrines and teachings*

As I came to the age of accountability and understood and experienced the effect of personal sin, the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ gave me the peace and courage to go forward in the knowledge that my sins could be forgiven and that there is always hope and the possibility of mercy for those who fall short.

As I experienced the death of loved ones, including my father, my mother, and my wife, the comforting revelations of the Holy Ghost gave me the strength to carry on. The Spirit affirms that there is purpose in mortal adversities and gives assurance of the Resurrection and the reality of family relationships sealed for eternity.

Throughout my life I have been blessed by the doctrine and teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As taught in the scriptures and by the leaders and teachers of this Church, the gospel has been a light to my path and the impetus for my temporal and spiritual progress. As Brigham Young taught, the gospel laws "teach men to be truthful, honest, chaste, sober, industrious, frugal and to love and practice every good word and work, . . . they elevate and ennoble man . . . [and], if fully obeyed, bring health and strength to the body, clearness to the perceptions, power to the reasoning faculties as well as salvation to the soul."<sup>2</sup>

Among many blessings I have received from gospel teachings are those promised for keeping the Word of Wisdom. For me these have included health and knowledge and the capacity to "run and not be weary, and . . . walk and not faint," and the fulfillment of the promise that "the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21; see also verses 18–19).

The gospel teaches us to pay our tithes and offerings and assures us of blessings when we do. I testify of the fulfillment of these promises in my life. I have seen the windows of heaven open in my behalf to bestow blessings unnumbered. Among these is the capacity to see the relative unimportance of the property, pride, prominence, and power of this world, in the context of eternity. How grateful I am for the focus and peace that come from a gospel-based understanding of the purpose of life and its relationship to eternity!

### *Blessings of good personal associations*

From my earliest years and through schooling and marriage to middle age and beyond, the Church has provided me personal associations with the finest people in the world. Teachers and classmates in Sunday School and Primary, in Scouting and other youth activities, in quorum and ward and stake activities have given me the finest possible role models and friends. Of course, our Church does not have a monopoly on good people, but we have a remarkable concentration of them. My associations in the organizations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have given me the basis to recognize, appreciate, and enlarge my associations with people of quality in other churches and organizations.

### *Blessings relating to eternal families*

Because my father died before I was eight years old, I had early cause to wonder about the purposes of the Lord in depriving me of a relationship other boys enjoyed and took for granted. As with so many other mortal challenges, the perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ filled that void. How grateful I am that my brother and sister and I were raised by a widowed mother who used her faith and our parents' temple marriage to make our departed father a daily presence in our lives. We never had cause to feel that we

were without a father. We had a father, but he was away for a season. There are few things more important in this life than knowing your place in mortality and your potential in eternity. Marriages sealed for eternity in a temple of the Lord provide that possibility for every child and for every adult.

Over the years, my active participation in the Church has provided me access to the counsel and inspiration of the leaders of the Church on things I should do as a husband and father and leader in my family. Again and again, in stake and general conferences, in priesthood quorums, and in Sunday School classes, I have been taught and inspired by wonderful and experienced fathers, mothers, and grandparents.

I have sought to follow those teachings to improve my participation in those associations that will persist for eternity. To cite only one example, I have been taught the power of a priesthood blessing—not just a blessing of healing, but a blessing of comfort and guidance that a father holding the Melchizedek Priesthood is privileged to give to members of his family. Learning and applying that principle has favored me and my loved ones with the sweetness and closeness that can come only from sensing the significance of the priesthood of God in an eternal family.

### *Blessings of scriptural and prophetic counsel*

I am also grateful for the warnings of the scriptures and Church leaders on things to avoid. By following that counsel I have been able to avoid pitfalls that might otherwise have trapped and enslaved me. Alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pornography, and gambling are but a few examples of dangerous substances and addictive practices we have been warned to avoid. I appeal to all—especially to young people—to hear and heed the words of the men and women God has called as your leaders and teachers. You

will be blessed if you refrain from setting your own wisdom or desires ahead of the commandments of your Creator and the warnings of His servants.

The scriptures tell us to take upon us the “whole armor” of God that we “may be able to withstand the evil day.” They promise that the “breastplate of righteousness” and “the shield of faith” will “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:15–17). I urge you to obey those teachings and lay claim on those blessings. They include the personal spiritual conversion—the “mighty change . . . in our hearts” (Mosiah 5:2)—that helps us become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

The leaders of this Church say, as the Savior said: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17).

Your leaders also say, along with King Benjamin: “I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41).

### **The Lord has given us everything**

In modern revelation the Lord has declared, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

What has our Savior done for us? He has given us His Atonement, His gospel, and His Church, a sacred combination that gives us the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. I testify that this is true, and I testify of God the Father, the author of the plan, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Atoning One, who has made it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Calvin Grondahl, [Ogden, Utah] *Standard-Examiner*, 26 May 1990.
2. Letter to the editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, 7 Jan. 1869, quoted in Jed Woodworth, "Brigham Young and the Mission of Mormonism," *Brigham Young University Studies*, volume 40, number 2 (2001), 11.

## President Faust

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Logan and Ogden institutes for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

## Consecrating heart, soul, and mind

These remarks are addressed to the imperfect but still striving in the household of faith. As always, my immediate audience is myself.

We tend to think of consecration only as yielding up, when divinely directed, our material possessions. But ultimate consecration is the yielding up of oneself to God. *Heart, soul, and mind* were the encompassing words of Christ in describing the first commandment, which is constantly, not periodically, operative (see Matthew 22:37). If it is kept, then our performances will in turn be fully consecrated for the lasting welfare of our souls (see 2 Nephi 32:9).

Such totality involves the submissive converging of feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds, the very opposite of estrangement: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Many ignore consecration because it seems too abstract or too daunting. The conscientious among us, however, experience divine discontent because of progression mixed with procrastination. Hence, loving counsel is given with the confirmation of this direction, encouragement to continue the journey, and consolation as we experience individually the inherent degrees of difficulty.

## Be fully submissive, not holding back part

Spiritual submissiveness is not accomplished in an instant, but by the incremental improvements and by the successive use of stepping-stones. Stepping-stones are meant to be taken one at a time anyway. Eventually our wills can be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" as we are "willing to submit . . . even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 15:7; 3:19). Otherwise, though striving, we will continue to feel the world's prop wash and be partially diverted.

Illustrations involving economic consecration are relevant. When Ananias and Sapphira sold their possessions, they “kept back part of the price” (see Acts 5:1–11). So many of us cling tenaciously to a particular “part,” even treating our obsessions like possessions. Thus, whatever else we may have already given, the last portion is the hardest to yield. Granted, partial surrender is still commendable, but it resembles, more than faintly, the excuse, “I gave at the office” (see James 1:7–8).

We may, for instance, have a specific set of skills which we mistakenly come to think we somehow own. If we continue to cling to those more than to God, we are flinching in the face of the consecrating first commandment. Since God lends us “breath . . . from one moment to another,” hyperventilating over these distractions is not recommended! (Mosiah 2:21).

A stumbling block appears when we serve God generously with time and checkbooks but still withhold portions of our inner selves, signifying that we are not yet fully His!

Some have difficulty when particular tasks enter their sunset phase. John the Baptist is a model, however, saying of Jesus’ growing flock, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Mistakenly regarding our present assignments as the only indicator of how much God loves us only adds to our reluctance to let go. Brothers and sisters, our individual worth is already divinely established as “great”; it does not fluctuate like the stock market.

Other stepping-stones remain unused because, like the rich, righteous young man, we are not yet willing to confront what we yet lack (see Mark 10:21). A residue of selfishness is thereby exposed.

Shrinking occurs in so many ways. The terrestrial kingdom, for example, will include the “honorable,” clearly not bearers of false witness. Yet they were still “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:75, 79). The best way to valiantly testify of Jesus is to become steadily more like

Him, and it is that consecration that carves out the emulative character (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

### **Do not put other gods before God**

In meeting these recited challenges, spiritual submissiveness is fortunately and helpfully adroit—sometimes helping us to “let go” of things, even mortal life, other times to “hold fast,” and still other times to use the next stepping-stone (see 1 Nephi 8:30).

But if we lack proportion, the next few yards can seem so formidable. Though aware of how God blessed ancient Israel to escape from mighty Pharaoh and his hosts, myopic Laman and Lemuel still lacked faith in God to help them with a mere local Laban.

We can also be deflected if we are too anxious to please those who are ascendant in our professional and avocational niches. Pleasing “other gods” instead of the real God still violates the first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

We sometimes even defend our idiosyncrasies, as if these protrusions somehow constituted our individuality. In a way, discipleship is a “contact sport,” as the Prophet Joseph testified:

“I am like a huge, rough stone . . . ; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force. . . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 304).

Since knees often bend long before minds, holding back this “part” deprives God’s work of some of mankind’s very best intellects. Far better to be meek like Moses, who learned things he “never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). Yet sadly, brothers and sisters, in the subtle interplay of agency and identity, there is so much hesitation. The surrender of the mind is actually a victory, because it then introduces

us to God's stretching and "higher" ways! (see Isaiah 55:9).

Ironically, inordinate attention, even to good things, can diminish our devotion to God. For instance, one can be too caught up in sports and the forms of body worship we see among us. One can reverence nature and yet neglect nature's God. One can have an exclusionary regard for good music and similarly with a worthy profession. In such circumstances, the "weightier matters" are often omitted (Matthew 23:23; see also 1 Corinthians 2:16). Only the Highest One can fully guide us as to the highest good which you and I can do.

On the two great commandments, Jesus declared emphatically, everything else hangs, not vice versa (see Matthew 22:40). The first commandment is not suspended just because of our vigorous pursuit of a lesser good, for we do not worship a lesser god.

### **Be meek, acknowledging God's hand**

Before enjoying the harvests of righteous efforts, let us therefore first acknowledge God's hand. Otherwise, the rationalizations appear, and they include, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Or, we "vaunt" ourselves, as ancient Israel would have done (except for Gideon's deliberately small army), by boasting that "mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2). Touting our own "hand" makes it doubly hard to confess God's hand in all things (see Alma 14:11; D&C 59:21).

At a place called Meribah, one of the greatest ever, Moses, was fatigued by people clamoring for water. Momentarily, Moses "spake unadvisedly," saying, "Must we fetch you water?" (Psalm 106:33; Numbers 20:10; see also Deuteronomy 4:21). The Lord mentored remarkable Moses through the pronoun problem and further magnified him. We would do well to be as meek as Moses (see Numbers 12:3).

Jesus never, never, never lost His focus! Though He went about doing so very much good, He always knew that the Atonement awaited, pleading with perspective, "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27; see also 5:30; 6:38).

As you and I develop additional love, patience, and meekness, the more we have to give God and humanity. Moreover, no one else is placed exactly as we are in our opportune human orbits.

Granted, the stepping-stones take us into new territory which we may be very reluctant to explore. Hence, the successful users of the stepping-stones are powerful motivators for the rest of us. We usually pay more attention to those we quietly admire. The hungry prodigal son remembered the menus in his home, but he was also drawn by other memories, declaring, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18).

### **Consecration returns to God what is His**

In striving for ultimate submission, our wills constitute all we really have to give God anyway. The usual gifts and their derivatives we give to Him could be stamped justifiably "Return to Sender," with a capital S. Even when God receives this one gift in return, the fully faithful will receive "all that [He] hath" (D&C 84:38). What an exchange rate!

Meanwhile, certain realities remain: God has given us our lives, our agency, our talents, and our opportunities; He has given us our possessions; He has given us our appointed mortal spans, complete with the needed breaths (see D&C 64:32). Guided by such perspective, we will avoid serious errors of proportion. Some of these are far less amusing than would be hearing a double quartet and mistaking it for the Tabernacle Choir!

No wonder President Hinckley has stressed our being a covenant people, emphasizing the covenants of the sacrament, tithing, and the temple, citing sacrifice

as the “very essence of the Atonement” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 147).

### Jesus’ example of total submissiveness

Breathtaking submissiveness was achieved by the Savior as He faced the anguish and agonies of the Atonement and “would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). On our small, imperfect scale, we face tests and wish that these would somehow be taken away.

Consider this: What of Jesus’ ministry if He had performed additional miracles but without the transcending miracle of Gethsemane and Calvary? His other miracles brought blessed extensions of life and lessened suffering—for some. But how could these miracles possibly compare with the greatest miracle of the universal Resurrection? (see 1 Corinthians 15:22). The multiplying of the loaves and fishes fed a hungry multitude. Even so, recipients were soon hungry again, while those who partake of the Bread of Life will never hunger again (see John 6:51, 58).

### Full submission brings God’s fulness

In pondering and pursuing consecration, understandably we tremble inwardly at what may be required. Yet the Lord has said consolingly, “My grace is sufficient for you” (D&C 17:8). Do we really believe Him? He has also promised to make weak

things strong (see Ether 12:27). Are we really willing to submit to that process? Yet if we desire fulness, we cannot hold back part!

Having our wills increasingly swallowed up by the will of the Father actually means an enhanced individuality, stretched and more capable of receiving “all that [God] hath” (D&C 84:38). Besides, how could we be entrusted with His “all” until our wills are much more like His? Nor could His “all” be fully appreciated by the partially committed.

Frankly, it is our prospective selves we betray by holding back whatever the “part.” No need therefore to ask, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). Rather, let us inquire about our individual stumbling blocks, “Lord, is it this?” We may have known the answer for a long time and may need resolve more than His response.

The greatest happiness in God’s generous plan is finally reserved for those who are willing to stretch and to pay the costs of journeying to His regal realm. Brothers and sisters, “come, let us anew [this] journey pursue” (“Come, Let Us Anew,” *Hymns*, no. 217).

In the name of the Lord of the outstretched arm (see D&C 103:17; 136:22), even Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 172nd Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 6, 2002, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a men’s choir from BYU—Idaho. Kevin Brower and

Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the



172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing for this session will be furnished by a men's choir from BYU—Idaho, directed by Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Sing Praise to

Him." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker. He will be followed by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Sing Praise to Him."

Elder John B. Dickson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Lessons learned from Joseph F. Smith

I want to address my remarks tonight to you great young men who bear the holy Aaronic Priesthood. What a special blessing it is to bear the priesthood of God, which can only multiply our powers, abilities, and discernment. To illustrate the blessings received from this privilege, I would like to speak about two men of God, both of whom carried the name of Joseph.

My father had a unique experience when he was the age of a priest. There were no high schools where he lived, and he wanted an education. He received permission from his father to leave the farm and seek his education elsewhere, but he had to make it on his own. Arriving in Salt Lake City, he heard of an employment position being offered in the home of President Joseph F. Smith. He was hired to care for the prophet's two cows. In our family home evenings we would want Dad to relate experiences about his early life of living in the home of the prophet. We would hear him make reports like this:

Sister Smith instructed my father in his duties, explaining that the cows "were aristocrats, and you must treat them well. You are to keep them so clean and train them so well that if I should ever at any time conclude to move them into the parlor, they would be clean enough to enter." Dad said he understood milking but not laundering cows.

Before milking each morning and night, the cows were thoroughly washed and dried with hot water, soap, and towels prepared for that purpose. They were fed the best of hay and milked at exactly the same hour twice a day.

In addition to his duties with the Smith family and their "aristocratic" cows, my father was asked on occasion to do some housework. He would tell us stories like this: "One frosty morning I washed the steps leading to the official residence of the President of the Church. It nearly led to his downfall, for I let the water freeze before drying. Then I had to take boiling water and thaw the ice and take towels to dry the stones. The steps were nearly clean, but my classmates were passing on their way to school before the job

was completed. It was a humbling experience.”

By telling these stories, I don’t want to leave you with the impression that my father was a male twin to Cinderella. The Smith family took this poor farm boy from Idaho into their home while he finished high school and attended the University of Utah. They included him in their family activities, around the dinner table, and at family prayer. My father shared with us his witness that the prophet Joseph F. Smith was truly a man of God:

“When I kneeled with the prophet, in family prayer, and listened to his earnest supplications for the blessings of the Lord upon his family and their flocks and their herds, I realized that those same humiliating cows were the subject of his blessings, [and] my feet were brought solidly to earth. . . . Most great men I have known have been deflated by intimate contact. Not so with the prophet Joseph F. Smith. Every common everyday act added inches to his greatness. To me he was prophet even while washing his hands or untying his shoes.”

The lessons learned taught us a great appreciation and love for a prophet of God.

My father’s description of the prophet Joseph F. Smith reminds me of the Pharaoh’s statement about Joseph of Egypt: “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38).

### Gift of the Holy Ghost can protect us

My father’s stories tell us about President Smith, his family, and his cows, and they also reveal how times have changed since the early 20th century. I don’t think my father ever imagined our modern-day computers that sit on small desks and have speeds measured in gigahertz, storage measured in gigabytes. I also don’t think he ever imagined the evils that Satan can do with these same marvelous

technologies. Through his evil ways, Satan has been able to spread many new, infectious viruses. These viruses will inflict great damage on our spirits if we do not have powerful ways of defending against them. This causes me to think of the greatest antivirus program of all—that is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

About this gift, President Joseph F. Smith said: “‘The gift of the Holy Ghost,’ is a special blessing sealed upon baptized repentant believers in Jesus Christ, and is ‘an abiding witness.’ The spirit of God may be enjoyed as a temporary influence by which divine light and power come to mankind for special purposes and occasions. But the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was received by the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and is bestowed in confirmation, is a permanent witness and higher endowment” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 5:4).

### The example of Joseph of Egypt

It is important that your families assist you in learning about the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Then all of us must rely on the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide us in discerning right from wrong. This is where the example of Joseph of Egypt helps instruct each of us. He relied on the Spirit of the Lord so completely that even a man who was blinded by the practice of idolatry, namely Pharaoh, recognized his unusual countenance and strength.

Let us try tonight to see what great messages we can gain from a study of great leaders in the scriptures. Joseph Fielding Smith instructed us in his *Answers to Gospel Questions*:

“There is ample evidence that boys were called and ordained in ancient times. In antediluvian times, when the lives of men were greatly prolonged, some were called to act at comparatively tender years. Enoch was but twenty-five when he was

ordained by Adam; . . . and Noah received the priesthood when he was but ten years of age [see D&C 107:48, 52]. How old Joseph, son of Israel, was when he received the priesthood is not recorded; but it must have been when he was very young. He was sold by his brethren when he was only seventeen, and he must have had the priesthood before that time, for he exercised it in the land of Egypt [see Genesis 37:2; 40:8–19; 41:14–36]” (comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 2:9).

Turning to the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, we find the story of Joseph. Joseph had 11 brothers—10 of them older than he. His father seemed to favor him more than the others. He made Joseph a coat of many colors, let him remain at home, and instructed him occasionally to go out and check up on his brothers who were tending the flocks. Joseph also had dreams that seemed to put him in a place of authority ahead of his brothers.

One day when Joseph was checking on his brothers as they tended the flocks, they decided they’d had about enough of Joseph and wanted to do away with him. An opportunity came to sell Joseph as a slave to a company of Ishmeelites traveling on their way to Egypt.

#### *Joseph prospers in difficult circumstances*

Suddenly, Joseph found himself in a strange land with strange customs, a strange religion, and worst of all, being sold as a slave. Joseph presented himself so well and so ably that he was purchased by “Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard” (Genesis 37:36).

“And the Lord was with Joseph, [and he carried a spirit with him that helped as he became] a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

“And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and [Potiphar] made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

“And it came to pass from the time that he had made [Joseph] overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

“And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured” (Genesis 39:2–6).

#### *Joseph flees from temptation*

One day as Joseph was working in the house, he found himself in a difficult position. Potiphar’s wife made unwanted approaches to him. Joseph immediately knew that he was in the wrong place. We have him saying:

“There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? . . .

“And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:9, 12).

We learn a great lesson from Joseph. When he was presented with a temptation, he immediately separated himself from even the appearance of evil. All of us have events in our lives which find us in challenging situations.

When we are confronted with that which is evil and degrading—whether it be the wrong kind of music, a television program, or Internet sites which place us in the wrong environment—how strengthening it is to remember the story of Joseph: “And [he] fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12). Joseph removed himself from the temptation.

### *The Lord is with Joseph in prison*

Even making the right choices did not free Joseph from the challenges he faced in life. When Potiphar returned home, his wife complained to her husband that Joseph had mocked her. Potiphar was so upset that he “took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

“[And again] the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and [He] gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

“[Soon] the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it” (Genesis 39:20–22).

But the Lord was with Joseph, and an opportunity was again presented to him while he served in prison. Two of the Pharaoh’s servants were also cast into prison. Each of them had a dream which Joseph was able to interpret. One of them was to lose his life in prison; the other would again in three days return to his position as chief butler for the Pharaoh. Both dreams came to pass. The butler returned to his high position with the Pharaoh and forgot all about Joseph until two years had passed.

Then the Pharaoh had a dream. No one could interpret his dream. The butler finally remembered Joseph. He told the Pharaoh about Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams. “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh” (Genesis 41:14).

Joseph was able to interpret the Pharaoh’s dream. The Pharaoh, being so impressed, made Joseph one of his servants. Again the Lord was with Joseph. Soon Joseph rose to a position of being second to the Pharaoh in all the land of Egypt. There was something special that distin-

guished Joseph from all the other servants. Pharaoh remarked what made Joseph different from all of the others when he said, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Genesis 41:38).

### **Heed warnings of the Holy Ghost**

You will notice in each situation in which Joseph found himself that the Lord was with him. It was easy to recognize the special spirit in him because of the way he lived and heeded the voice of the Lord to direct him.

That same recognition will surely be with each of us as we are led and directed by His Holy Spirit. Listen to the still, small voice when you are faced with a time of decision. It will surely be a strong warning voice to tell you to turn off the wrong kind of music, to flee from the degrading television programs, or to get out of a Web page that will only bring evil thoughts into your mind. The Holy Spirit will let you know when you are in forbidden territory.

I promise you that if you will heed the voice of warning of the Holy Ghost and will follow His direction, you will be blessed with the ministering of angels, which will add wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory to your life. Remember, the Lord is bound by solemn covenant to bless our lives according to our faithfulness. Only He can turn us into men in whom the Spirit of God, namely the Holy Ghost, is.

What a blessing it is to bear the Lord’s holy priesthood and have that power and strength within us. May the Lord inspire and direct us to study the stories of great prophets who have walked the earth. May we glean from their lives that which will draw us closer to our Maker and help us enjoy the blessings and fruits that come from the gospel of our Lord and Savior. May we be so inspired to follow His path is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Ben B. Banks

### The road we call life

Brethren, I am delighted to be with you this evening. I too want to speak specifically with the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I love you and care very much about you.

In the new *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the First Presidency says to you:

"Our beloved young men . . . , we have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity" (page 2).

I hope in some small way this evening that you can learn from my nearly 70 years of traveling this road we call life. Your parents or grandparents may have already told you this: "The older you get, the quicker time seems to pass." It is as though one minute you are 12 with your whole life in front of you, and the next minute you are nearly 70 with an expanding waistline in front of you!

It is hard to believe it was nearly 13 years ago when I last spoke in general priesthood meeting. At that time I told the brethren about a journey I made by bicycle with my sons and drew from that experience the importance of preparing well for the journey of life.

Today I want to tell you about other journeys I have made and share the lessons I have learned from them.

### Preparing for a bicycle trip—and for life

Recently some members of my family determined it would be fun to bicycle from Bozeman, Montana, to Jackson Hole,

Wyoming, in the United States. This 225-mile journey would take us three days, and we would cross the Continental Divide on three occasions. We determined that traveling through the mountain passes with good weather would be a wonderful experience that would help us appreciate God's creations.

After careful planning and preparation, two of my sons and my only daughter and I set out on the first day to cycle to our overnight stop in Big Sky, Montana. The morning was perfect, and we expected a delightful journey. However, as we traveled along, dark clouds gathered and brought rain, which eventually became sleet and hail and made us extremely cold and wet and miserable. As we concluded day one of our journey and reached our overnight destination, I was reminded that life can be just like that day. Fortunately, we had prepared for all types of weather conditions; had we not done so, it would have been difficult to complete our journey that first day. At each stage of life's journey, we should set out full of hope and optimism, but we should be prepared nonetheless to face opposition or hardship at some point.

### Establish good patterns while young

The patterns you establish in your youth may accompany you throughout the rest of your mortal life. By making the right choices now, you will be able to take the path that will help you endure the coldest and bleakest moments later.

For example, if you are in the habit of using foul language, the longer you use it, the harder it is to change and stop using it. Better now to choose a different road, one that leads to cleanliness in thought and word and action so you can enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Imagine the difficulty of serving a mission and having bad language pop into your mind when you need to have the Spirit with you

as your constant companion. If using bad language is a problem for you, now is the time to change.

### **Give credit to God, not to ourselves**

On day two of our trip, we headed to West Yellowstone. Everything was as it should be—the bicycles were running smoothly and our legs were rested as we progressed toward our second destination. It was then that I realized if we are not careful when everything is going just right in life, there can be a temptation to forget our Heavenly Father and give credit to ourselves for our happy state. Don't make that mistake.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 255–56).

The Book of Mormon is replete with accounts of those who were blessed by the Lord and then became boastful of their accomplishments. Eventually in their pride they left the correct path and lost all they had as they fell away from the truth. Make sure you don't become like the Nephites of old; always remember the true source of your blessings.

### **Start early to achieve goals**

On day three of our journey, I learned that even though we may have some uphill struggles in our lives, our attitude will determine how we face them. On that day we crossed the Continental Divide three times, rising from an elevation of 4,800 feet to 8,300 feet. Climbing steep mountain passes on a bike requires the right attitude to get to the right altitude. It's the same with life. By setting worthwhile goals and keeping your eyes fixed on them, you will learn self-discipline and accomplish

much. Yes, there were times when climbing the steep mountain grades was as much as I could bear, but I didn't give up, because I was fixed in my purpose.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, I urge you to set goals for yourselves, such as completing seminary, serving an honorable mission, graduating from college, and being worthy of a temple marriage. At your age these may seem like very big goals, but if you start climbing now you will be so much better prepared to accomplish them.

### **Rely on the Spirit in making decisions**

Two years ago Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and I had the opportunity to go on a canoe trip into the Quetico wilderness area in Ontario, Canada, portaging from lake to lake. As we reached the halfway point across one of the larger lakes, the weather turned very bad, and the once tranquil water turned angry and perilous, tossing our little canoe to and fro.

We had a decision to make. Do we try to reach our planned destination, or do we head for the nearest island and wait for the storm to pass? The answer seems obvious now, but at the time it was not an easy decision to make. By carrying on, we might arrive at our planned campsite. By delaying our journey, we would arrive very late and may have to travel in the dark. As we pondered the options, we had the impression to head to the nearest island quickly. As we did so, a much worse-than-anticipated storm rolled by us. Had we elected to continue canoeing, we would have put our lives in great peril.

Here in mortality we are called upon to make serious decisions, the outcome of which can have a lasting effect upon our spiritual future. I encourage you to always be worthy to seek for the Spirit to help you always choose the right.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi tells us, "Then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye

have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:18).

### **Enduring the journey brings happiness**

As our family concluded the 225-mile bicycle journey, we learned that no matter how difficult things can become on this road we call life, great happiness is waiting for those who keep the commandments and endure to the end.

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, you have a responsibility to remain firmly focused on your eternal destination. Yes, life's journeys can have many ups and downs. Yes, there will be days when you will feel the going is tough. But as you stay on the right path, the reward

at the end of life's journey is well worth the moments of adversity you experience along the way.

Again, from the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, the First Presidency writes: "May you keep your minds and bodies clean from the sins of the world so you can do the great work that lies before you. We pray that you will be worthy to carry on the responsibilities of building the kingdom of God and preparing the world for the Second Coming of the Savior" (page 3).

My young friends, please know the importance of being wise by following the counsel of our prophets, and happiness will be yours throughout life's journey.

Of this I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Spencer J. Condie**

### **Wilford Woodruff's missions bless others**

As a young man of 27, Wilford Woodruff was ordained a priest on November 5, 1834. Eight days later he began a two-year mission in the southern states.<sup>1</sup> One night he and his companion found lodging with a family who provided them with a bare floor for a bed, which he described as "pretty hard after walking sixty miles without anything to eat."<sup>2</sup>

The next day they walked 12 miles through the rain until they came to the house of a man who happened to be a member of the Missouri mob. Brother Woodruff said:

"The family were about to sit down to breakfast as we came in. In those days it was the custom of the Missourians to ask you to eat even though they were hostile to you; so he asked us to take breakfast, and we were very glad of the invitation. He knew we were Mormons; and as soon as we began to eat, he began to swear about the Mormons. He had a large platter of bacon and eggs, and plenty of bread

on the table, and his swearing did not hinder our eating, for the harder he swore the harder we ate, until we got our stomachs full; then we arose from the table, took our hats, and thanked him for our breakfast. The last we heard of him he was still swearing. I trust the Lord will reward him for our breakfast."<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the first year of that mission he recounted that he had "traveled three thousand two hundred and forty-eight miles, held one hundred and seventy meetings, [and] baptized forty-three persons."<sup>4</sup>

His first mission to the southern states was followed by two brief missions to the Fox Islands off the coast of Maine<sup>5</sup> and then subsequently two missions to England.<sup>6</sup> During his latter mission in England, in 1840, he acknowledged that "through the blessings of God," he had been an instrument in bringing over 1,800 souls into the Church within a period of eight months.<sup>7</sup>

Wilford Woodruff claimed the Book of Mormon promise that "God has pro-

vided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.”<sup>8</sup> My young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, I would remind you that our Father in Heaven not only wants you to be good, but to be good for something, to serve and bless the lives of others, and to become a benefit to your fellow beings.

### **Increase in wisdom and stature**

We read in the Gospel of Luke that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”<sup>9</sup> Inasmuch as our earthly quest for perfection involves becoming more like the Savior, then we also should increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Priesthood quorum activities and Mutual activities with the young women, when carefully and prayerfully planned and discussed in the bishopric youth committee,<sup>10</sup> will help every young man and young woman to grow in wisdom as they gain a greater appreciation for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets and as they participate in Mutual activities involving “anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy.”<sup>11</sup>

Counseling together in the bishopric youth committee also provides valuable training for an entire generation of future leaders who learn to work effectively together in councils.

You young men will grow in stature and physical strength as you engage in folk dancing, sports, and wholesome, friendly athletic competition characterized by good sportsmanship. You will grow in favor with God as you engage in family history research, perform baptisms in the temple for deceased ancestors, become faithful home teachers, frequently clean the chapel, visit nursing homes, and help beautify your communities. As you do so, you will exemplify King Benjamin’s counsel that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the ser-

vice of your God.”<sup>12</sup> A wise youth leader will place less emphasis on fund-raising activities and a much greater emphasis upon rendering selfless service to others.

You young men will increase in favor with man and become better prepared for missions, marriage, and future employment as you learn more about various careers and develop greater self-confidence through giving speeches and participating in original one-act plays and talent shows.

### **Minister to others**

Our youth activities should reflect our belief that “men are, that they might have joy,”<sup>13</sup> and we should be willing to share that joy with others. Not long ago I met a woman from the East who is now living in the Salt Lake Valley. She is a devout member of another Christian church, and I asked her how she enjoyed living among the Latter-day Saints. She said, “My husband and I get along fine, but I worry about our teenage daughter. Each Wednesday evening about seven o’clock, several girls in our neighborhood walk right past our home headed somewhere together, and not once have they stopped to invite our 14-year-old daughter to go with them.”

I said, “My dear, this is your lucky day; I am in a position to get that problem fixed.” She readily gave me her daughter’s name and address, and we made contact with both the stake president and the seminary principal.

Our friends and neighbors are children of a loving Father in Heaven, who desires that all of us return to Him. Can we be content when not all the members of our quorum are in attendance Sunday morning? Surely we can extend ourselves to the less active and those of other faiths and warmly invite them to our Young Men and Young Women Mutual activities, seminary, Sunday School classes, and sacrament meetings.

When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood un-



der the hands of the resurrected John the Baptist, they received “the keys of the ministering of angels,”<sup>14</sup> and so did you when you were ordained. I pray that you wonderful young men will not only be worthy to *receive* ministering angels, but that you, like young Wilford Woodruff, will *become* a ministering angel in the lives of others as you exercise your faith in working “mighty miracles,” thereby becoming a “great benefit” to your fellow beings.

### **The Holy Ghost will protect and direct you**

Satan would diminish your faith and dilute your priesthood power to work mighty miracles, but a loving Heavenly Father has provided you with providential protection—the gift of the Holy Ghost. In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon we learn that as Lehi read the scriptures, “he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>15</sup> Nephi later promises us that as we “feast upon the words of Christ . . . , the words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do.”<sup>16</sup>

You may be facing decisions about a mission, your future career, and, eventually, marriage. As you read the scriptures and pray for direction, you may not actually see the answer in the form of printed words on a page, but as you read you will receive distinct impressions and promptings, and, as promised, the Holy Ghost “will show unto you all things what ye should do.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The power of fasting and prayer**

Satan would have you surrender your moral agency to various forms of addictive behavior, but a loving Heavenly Father has promised you through His prophet Isaiah that through sincere fasting, as you subdue your physical appetites, He will help you “loose the bands of wickedness” and “break every yoke.”<sup>18</sup> Claim that promise through fasting. Our emptiness will provide more room for the fulness of the gospel. The hallowing precedes the hallowing.

Scripture study and fasting, preceded and followed by prayer, really can “change the night to day.”<sup>19</sup> The entire life of the Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrates the power of prayer and the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise that “if thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation.”<sup>20</sup> One important revelation you will receive will be insight into how you can best touch the lives of others who have lost their way. In so doing, it is well to remember President Hinckley’s wise counsel: “The Holy Ghost is the Testifier of Truth, who can teach men things they cannot teach one another.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Use priesthood to benefit others**

President Gordon B. Hinckley considers good friends to be one of the key ingredients in retaining new converts and in reclaiming the less active, and Robert Browning eloquently described how this is so:

Were I elect like you,  
I would encircle me with love, and raise  
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem  
Impossible for me to fail, so watched  
By gentle friends who made my cause  
their own.<sup>22</sup>

Late in life, as President of the Church, Wilford Woodruff declared:

“It does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me, by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me.”<sup>23</sup>

My young beloved brethren, I pray that each of us, through our faith, will use our priesthood power to work mighty miracles through sharing the gospel and serving others, thereby becoming a great

benefit to our fellow beings, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1909), 47.
2. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
3. *Wilford Woodruff*, 50.
4. *Wilford Woodruff*, 58.
5. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 70–86.
6. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 99–113; 114–28; 129–46.
7. See *Wilford Woodruff*, 119.
8. Mosiah 8:18.
9. Luke 2:52.
10. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 318–19.
11. Articles of Faith 1:13.
12. Mosiah 2:17.
13. 2 Nephi 2:25.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
15. See 1 Nephi 1:8–12.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.

17. 2 Nephi 32:5.
18. Isaiah 58:6.
19. “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
21. “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 7.
22. *Paracelsus*, in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 2 vols. (1902), 1:25.
23. “Discourse by President Woodruff,” *Millennial Star*, 5 Oct. 1891, 629.

## President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren, for your inspirational counsel.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then join in singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” Following this, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

## President James E. Faust

### The myth of “it can’t happen to me”

My beloved brethren of the priesthood of God, the responsibility of speaking to you tonight is overwhelming. I have prayed for inspiration and guidance, and I seek your understanding.

One of the great myths in life is when men think they are invincible. Too many think that they are men of steel, strong enough to withstand any temptation. They delude themselves into thinking, “It cannot happen to me.” Borrowing a thought from Bertrand Russell, “We are all like the turkey who wakes up [Thanksgiving] morning expecting lunch as usual. Things can go wrong at any time.”<sup>1</sup> Brethren, it *can* happen to any of us at any time. So much of our course in life is influenced by forces we only partly perceive.

### We often see only part of the danger

President Charles W. Penrose used to tell the story of an officer on the *Titanic* who stated that there was no fear of “God, man or devil,” because the *Titanic* was built so solidly that it could readily withstand collision with other ships or contact with any other force, including icebergs.<sup>2</sup> The *Titanic* was in fact three football fields in length, 12 stories high, and built of the finest steel. On that fateful night of April 14, 1912, other ships warned of ice ahead. Yet the *Titanic* continued to increase her speed, cutting through the cold Atlantic Ocean. By the time the lookouts sighted the iceberg, it was too late. The *Titanic* could not turn out of its way in time, and the iceberg scraped along the starboard side of the ship, creating a series of punc-

tures. Two hours and 40 minutes later the brand-new *Titanic* sank to the bottom of the ocean. Over 1,500 people drowned.

Usually one-eighth of an iceberg is above the waterline. The ice in the cold core is very compact, and keeps seven-eighths of the iceberg under water. As it was when the *Titanic* encountered the iceberg, so it is with us. We can often see only part of the danger that lies ahead.

### **David's tragic succumbing to weakness**

History is full of examples of men who were gifted and able but who, in a moment of weakness, threw away their promising lives. King David is a tragic example. As a youth he was handsome, brave, and full of faith. He slew the frightening giant, Goliath. He became king. He had everything a man could desire. Yet when he saw Bathsheba, he wanted her even though she was another man's wife. He had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, sent to the front of the hottest battle so that he would be killed. Uriah died in battle, and David married Bathsheba. As a consequence of this evil deed, David lost his spiritual inheritance.<sup>3</sup> For all the good David accomplished, much of it was negated because he allowed himself to succumb to a serious personal flaw.

### **False security regarding temptation**

I once heard a man tell his sons, "I can drive closer to the edge than you because I have had more experience than you." He thought he was in control, but he was really in denial. "The trouble with using experience as a guide is that the final exam often comes first and then the lesson."<sup>4</sup> Some people think their age and experience make them better able to withstand temptation. This is a falsehood.

I remember hearing President J. Reuben Clark Jr. tell of the time when one of his children was going out on a date. He asked them to come home at a certain

hour. "Chafing under that constant, urgent reminder, the [teenager] said, 'Daddy, what is the matter, don't you trust me?'"

"His answer must have shocked her as he said, 'No, my [child], I don't trust you. I don't even trust myself.'"<sup>5</sup>

### **Counsel for resisting temptation**

So that some things "can't happen to us," I suggest we learn from President Spencer W. Kimball's counsel:

"Develop discipline of self so that, more and more, you do not have to decide and redecide what you will do when you are confronted with the same temptation time and time again. You need only to decide some things once. How great a blessing it is to be free of agonizing over and over again regarding a temptation. To do such is time-consuming and very risky."<sup>6</sup>

### **"Just one" can lead to addiction**

Someone may rationalize by thinking, "Just one fix of drugs won't hurt me." That may sound harmless, but please know how powerful drugs are. I quote from a user: "There is no controlling drugs. It controls you. The first time, you usually feel nothing. That's when it grabs you."<sup>7</sup>

"Just one cigarette—just to see how it feels." But beware of the danger lurking here. Nicotine is highly addictive.<sup>8</sup> As few as four cigarettes may be enough to set someone on a path to becoming a regular smoker.<sup>9</sup>

"Just one can of beer." We do not know our potential for alcohol addiction, but one drink usually leads to another. It is much better never to take the first drink. Then you know you won't be led to more.

"The purchase of just one lottery ticket." This is more subtle than other addictions. You may not think gambling is an addiction because it is not a substance that is taken into the body, but as some-

one recently wrote: "Those who gamble risk more than just money. Their lives and families are at stake too."<sup>10</sup>

"Just one peek at a pornographic site on the Internet, or a quick look at a centerfold in a racy magazine." That sounds so harmless, but what we see is so much harder to get rid of than what we take into our bodies. Many hardened criminals admit they got their start in crime by viewing obscene pictures.

Some may say that inappropriate entertainment now and again is OK. However, this often desensitizes us to violence, improper sexual relations, vulgarity, taking the Lord's name in vain, and other associated evils.

### **The Holy Ghost increases our potential**

I have spoken at some length about things you *don't* want to happen to you. Now let's consider some of the good things that you *do* want to happen to you. If you are willing to pay the price for success, good things, even great things, *can* happen to you, even beyond your fondest dreams and expectations! Often we do not have even a glimpse of our potential for happiness and accomplishment in this life and in eternity because, as the Apostle Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly."<sup>11</sup> But the lens can be lightened and become crystal clear through the influence of the Holy Ghost. The Savior promised us that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,"<sup>12</sup> and "guide you into all truth."<sup>13</sup>

We must recognize that our natural gifts and abilities are limited, but when augmented by inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, our potential increases manifold. You need help from a power beyond your own to do something extraordinarily useful. You young men can have opportunities and receive blessings beyond your wildest dreams and expectations. Your future may not hold fame or fortune,

but it can be something far more lasting and fulfilling. Remember that what we do in life echoes in eternity.

### **Testimony grows as our faith is tested**

Some of you young men may not yet have a strong testimony of the divine origin of this Church like your parents have. You may wish you could be more sure that Joseph Smith actually saw in vision God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and that the Book of Mormon was truly translated from golden plates. You may have some lingering doubts about the law of tithing, the law of chastity, or the Word of Wisdom. This is not unusual for some young men your age. Your faith may not have been fully tested. You may not yet have had to defend your beliefs or lifestyle. I assure you that great things can happen to you. You can receive an unwavering testimony that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and that through Joseph Smith the gospel has been restored to the earth in its fulness. But that testimony may not come until your faith has been tried.<sup>14</sup>

### **Testimony grows from devoted service**

Many years ago two General Authorities called a very young man to be a new stake president. In his response the new stake president said he would give total devotion to his calling and would not ask any of the members of his stake to be more devoted than he. Then he bore his testimony that he believed the gospel with all his heart and proposed to live it.

Later at lunch one of the General Authorities asked this new stake president whether he knew absolutely that this gospel is true. He answered that he did not. The senior Apostle said to his fellow Apostle, "He knows it just as well as you do. The only thing that he *does not know* is that he *does know* it. It will be but a short time until he does know it. . . . You do not need to worry."

A short time later the new stake president testified that following a spiritual experience, "I shed tears of gratitude to the Lord for the abiding, perfect, and absolute testimony that came into my life of the divinity of this work."<sup>15</sup>

### Knowing that you know the gospel is true

Many of us do not have a full awareness of what we really know. Even though we have been taught the gospel, we may not be fully aware of what the Lord has put in our "inward parts" and written in our hearts.<sup>16</sup> As young men of the covenant, you are heirs to great promises. You have the opportunity to become more than "hewers of wood and drawers of water."<sup>17</sup>

I do not claim to have an absolute understanding of all of the principles of the gospel, but I have come to know with certainty the divinity and authority of this Church. This came to me gradually, line upon line and precept upon precept. I now *know* that I *know*, just as you can come to *know* that you *know*. It can happen to you.

Knowledge comes through faith. In our day and time we must come to know the truthfulness of what was on the golden plates without seeing them. They are not available for us to see and handle as they were for the Three Witnesses and for the Eight Witnesses. Some of those who actually saw and handled the golden plates did not remain faithful to the Church. Seeing an angel would be a great experience, but it is far greater to come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior through faith and the witness of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

You can also come to *know* what you *know* as a valiant son of God in the pre-mortal existence. It can happen to you. But it won't just happen automatically. You will have to exercise faith. The only way to acquire spiritual knowledge and keep it burning brightly is to be humble, prayerful, and to strive diligently to keep all of the commandments.

### Be swifter, higher, and stronger

At the opening ceremonies of the recently concluded 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Utah Symphony Orchestra performed a majestic musical piece written by John Williams especially as the official musical theme of the games. It was entitled "Call of the Champions." Tonight I wish to make a call to the champions. The stirring first words of this piece are *citius* (swifter), *altius* (higher), and *fortius* (stronger), which have been the official Olympic motto since 1924.

Brethren of the priesthood, we live in a marvelous time. Never in the history of the Church have we had more witnesses of the truthfulness of this holy work. We have our detractors and critics, as we have always had. But never has the Church climbed higher, moved swifter, or been stronger to accomplish its mission. Now is the time for all of us to reach upward and move onward. In God's work we too must be swifter, working with greater urgency; higher, striving for lofty spiritual goals; and stronger, relying on God's strength. It can happen to you.

The sure way to have life's joys and blessings come to you is to follow our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. So much good has come to us from past prophets, but it is President Hinckley's voice we need to hear today and his counsel we need to follow so that the best things can happen to us. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (1995), 610.
2. Quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. (1953), 1:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:39.
4. Author unknown, quoted in Robert Byrne, comp., *1,911 Best Things Anybody Ever Said* (1988), 386.

5. Quoted by Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 629.
6. *President Kimball Speaks Out* (1981), 94.
7. Quoted in Guillermo D. Jalil, *Street-Wise Drug Prevention: A Realistic Approach to Prevent and Intervene in Adolescent Drug Use* (1996; excerpt on the Internet at [www.nodrugs.com](http://www.nodrugs.com)).
8. See U.S. Department of Education, "Specific Drugs and Their Effects," in *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention* (printed publication also on the Internet at [www.health.org/govpubs/phd533/](http://www.health.org/govpubs/phd533/)).
9. See Janet Brigham, "Tobacco: Quitting for Good," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 52.
10. Shanna Ghaznavi, "Don't Bet Your Life," *New Era*, Feb. 2002, 26.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:12.
12. John 14:26.
13. John 16:13.
14. See Ether 12:6.
15. Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 192–93; italics added.
16. Jeremiah 31:33.
17. Joshua 9:21.
18. See John 20:29.

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The choir and congregation sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

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## President Thomas S. Monson

### They pray and they go

My brethren, I am honored by the privilege to speak to you this evening. What a joy to see this magnificent Conference Center filled to capacity with those young and old who hold the priesthood of God. To realize that similar throngs are assembled throughout the world brings to me an overwhelming sense of responsibility. I pray that the inspiration of the Lord will guide my thoughts and inspire my words.

Many years ago, on an assignment to Tahiti, I was talking to our mission president, President Raymond Baudin, about the Tahitian people. They are known as some of the greatest seafaring people in all the world. Brother Baudin, who speaks French and Tahitian but little English, was trying to describe to me the secret of the success of the Tahitian sea captains. He said, "They are amazing. The weather may be terrible, the vessels may be leaky, there may be no navigational aids except their inner feelings and the stars in the heavens, but they pray and they go." He repeated that phrase three times. There is a lesson in that statement. We need to

pray, and then we need to act. Both are important.

The promise from the book of Proverbs gives us courage:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>1</sup>

### Examples of a widow and of Nephi

We need but to turn to the account found in 1 Kings to appreciate anew the principle that when we follow the counsel of the Lord, when we pray and then go, the outcome benefits all. There we read that a most severe drought had gripped the land. Famine followed. Elijah the prophet received from the Lord what to him must have been an amazing instruction:

"Get thee to Zarephath . . . : behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." When he had found the widow, Elijah declared, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

"And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand."

Her response described her desperate situation as she explained that she was preparing a final and scanty meal for her son and for herself, and then they would die.

How implausible to her must have been Elijah's response:

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail."<sup>2</sup>

If I were to ask you which of all the passages in the Book of Mormon is the most widely read, I venture it would be the account found in 1 Nephi concerning Nephi, his brothers, his father, and the command to obtain from Laban the plates of brass. Perhaps this is because most of us, from time to time, pledge again to read the Book of Mormon. Usually we begin with 1 Nephi. In reality, the passages found therein portray beautifully the need to pray and then to go and do. Said Nephi:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."<sup>3</sup>

We remember the commandment. We remember the response. We remember the outcome.

#### **Cummings family prayed and then went**

In our day and our time there are many examples concerning the experiences of those who pray and then go and do. I share with you a touching account of

a fine family that lived in the beautiful city of Perth, Australia. In 1957, four months before the dedication of the New Zealand temple, Donald Cummings, the father, was the president of the member district in Perth. He and his wife and family were determined to attend the dedication of the temple, although they were of very modest financial means. They began to pray, to work, and to save. They sold their only car and gathered together every penny they could, but a week before their scheduled departure, they were still 200 pounds short. Through two unexpected gifts of 100 pounds each, they met their goal just in time. Because Brother Cummings couldn't get time off work for the trip, he decided to quit his job.

They traveled by train across the vast Australian continent, arriving at Sydney, where they joined other members also traveling to New Zealand. Brother Cummings and his family were among the first Australians to be baptized for the dead in the New Zealand temple. They were among the first ones to be endowed in the New Zealand temple from far-off Perth, Australia. They prayed, they prepared, and then they went.

When the Cummings family returned to Perth, Brother Cummings obtained a new and better job. He was still serving as district president nine years later when it was my privilege to call him as the first president of the Perth Australia Stake.<sup>4</sup> I think it significant that he is now the first president of the Perth Australia Temple.

#### **Missionaries pray and then go**

From the movie *Shenandoah* come the spoken words which inspire: "If we don't try, we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

There are now more than 60,000 full-time missionaries serving the Lord throughout the world. Many of this vast throng are listening in tonight and viewing this priesthood session of general conference. They pray and then they go,

trusting in the Lord concerning where they are sent and trusting in their mission president as to where they serve within their missions. Among the many revelations concerning their sacred callings are two passages which are favorites of mine. Both are from the Doctrine and Covenants.

The first is from section 100. You will remember that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon had been absent from their families for some time, and they were concerned about them. The Lord revealed unto them this assurance, which is comforting to missionaries throughout the Church: "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my friends . . . , your families are well; they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good; for in me there is all power."<sup>5</sup>

The second is from the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."<sup>6</sup>

### **Walter Krause prayed and then went**

Inspiring is the missionary service rendered by Walter Krause, who lives in Prenzlau, Germany. Brother Krause, whose dedication to the Lord is legendary, is now 92 years of age. As a patriarch he has given more than a thousand patriarchal blessings to members living throughout many parts of Europe.

Homeless following World War II, like so many others at that time, Brother Krause and his family lived in a refugee camp in Cottbus and began to attend church there. He was immediately called to lead the Cottbus branch. Four months later, in November of 1945, the country still in ruins, district president Richard Ranglack came to Brother Krause and asked him what he would think about going on a mission. Brother Krause's answer

reflects his commitment to the Church. Said he, "I don't have to think about it at all. If the Lord needs me, I'll go."

He set out on December 1, 1945, with 20 German marks in his pocket and a piece of dry bread. One of the branch members had given him a winter coat left over from a son who had fallen in the war. Another member, who was a shoemaker, gave him a pair of shoes. With these and with two shirts, two handkerchiefs, and two pairs of stockings, he left on his mission.

Once, in the middle of winter, he walked from Prenzlau to Kammin, a little village in Mecklenburg, where 46 attended the meetings which were held. He arrived long after dark that night after a six-hour march over roads, paths, and finally across plowed fields. Just before he reached the village, he came to a large, white, flat area which made for easy walking, and he soon arrived at a member's home to stay the night.

The next morning the game warden knocked on the door of the member's house, asking, "Do you have a guest?"

"Yes," came the reply.

The game warden continued, "Then come and take a look at his tracks." The large, flat area on which Brother Krause had walked was actually a frozen lake, and some time earlier the warden had chopped a large hole in the middle of the lake for fishing. The wind had driven snow over the hole and covered it so that Brother Krause could not have seen his danger. His tracks went right next to the edge of the hole and straight to the house of the member, without his knowing anything about it. Weighed down by his backpack and his rubber boots, he would certainly have drowned had he gone one step further toward the hole he couldn't see. He commented later that this event caused quite a stir in the village at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Brother Krause's entire life has been to pray and then to go.



### **The calling and service of James Womack**

Should any of us feel inadequate or tend to doubt the ability to respond to a priesthood call to serve the Lord, let this divine truth be remembered: "With God all things are possible."<sup>8</sup>

Not long ago I learned of the passing of James Womack, the patriarch of the Shreveport Louisiana Stake. He had served long and had blessed ever so many lives. Years before, President Spencer W. Kimball shared with President Gordon B. Hinckley, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, and me an experience he had in the appointment of a patriarch for the Shreveport Louisiana Stake of the Church. President Kimball described how he interviewed, how he searched, and how he prayed that he might learn the Lord's will concerning the selection. For some reason, none of the suggested candidates was the man for this assignment at this particular time.

The day wore on; the evening meetings began. Suddenly President Kimball turned to the stake president and asked him to identify a particular man seated two-thirds of the way back from the front of the chapel. The stake president replied that the individual was James Womack, whereupon President Kimball said: "He is the man the Lord has selected to be your stake patriarch. Please have him meet with me in the high council room following the meeting."

Stake president Charles Cagle was startled, for James Womack did not wear the label of a typical man. He had sustained terrible injuries while in combat during World War II. He lost both hands and part of an arm, as well as most of his eyesight and part of his hearing. Nobody had wanted to let him into law school when he returned, yet he finished third in his class at Louisiana State University.

That evening as President Kimball met with Brother Womack and informed him that the Lord had designated him to be the patriarch, there was a protracted

silence in the room. Then Brother Womack said: "Brother Kimball, it is my understanding that a patriarch is to place his hands on the head of the person he blesses. As you can see, I have no hands to place on the head of anyone."

Brother Kimball, in his kind and patient manner, invited Brother Womack to stand behind the chair on which Brother Kimball was seated. He then said, "Now, Brother Womack, lean forward and see if the stumps of your arms will reach the top of my head." To Brother Womack's joy, they touched Brother Kimball's head, and the exclamation came forth, "I can reach you! I can reach you!"

"Of course you can reach me," responded Brother Kimball. "And if you can reach me, you can reach any whom you bless. I will probably be the shortest person you will ever have seated before you."

President Kimball reported to us that when the name of James Womack was presented to the stake conference, "the hands of the members shot heavenward in an enthusiastic vote of approval."

Remembered were the words of the Lord to the prophet Samuel at the time David was designated to be a future king of Israel: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."<sup>9</sup>

### **"Be ye doers of the word"**

Brethren, whatever our calling, regardless of our fears or anxieties, let us pray and then go and do, remembering the words of the Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>10</sup>

In the epistle of James we are counseled, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."<sup>11</sup>

Let us, as a mighty body of priesthood, be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Let us pray; then let us go and do.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Proverbs 3:5–6.
2. 1 Kings 17:9–11, 13–16; see also v. 12.
3. 1 Nephi 3:7.
4. See Richard J. Marshall, "Saga of Sacrifice," *Ensign*, Aug. 1974, 66–67.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 100:1.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
7. See Garold N. Davis and Norma S. Davis, "Behind the Iron Curtain: Recollections of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945–1989," *Brigham Young University Studies*, volume 5, number 1 (1995), 54–55.
8. Matthew 19:26.
9. 1 Samuel 16:7.
10. Matthew 28:20.
11. James 1:22.

**President Hinckley**

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from

9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening; otherwise you may discover that the meeting's half over when you arrive.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, please obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We're deeply grateful to the men's choir from BYU—Idaho for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Hope of Israel." The benediction will then be offered by Elder L. Edward Brown of the Seventy.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley****Being worthy to exercise the priesthood**

My dear brethren, I wish to speak very plainly this evening about a matter that I feel deeply concerned over. What a great pleasure and a worrisome challenge it is to speak to you. What a tremendous brotherhood we are as those who hold this precious and wonderful priesthood. It comes from God, our Eternal Father, who in this glorious dispensation has, with His Beloved Son, spoken again from the heavens. They have sent Their authorized servants to bestow this divine authority upon men.

Personal worthiness becomes the standard of eligibility to receive and exercise this sacred power. It is of this that I wish to speak tonight.

I begin by reading to you from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121:

"The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven can-

not be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

"That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (D&C 121:36–37).

That is the unequivocal word of the Lord concerning His divine authority. What a tremendous obligation this places upon each of us. We who hold the priesthood of God must stand above the ways of the world. We must discipline ourselves. We cannot be self-righteous, but we can and must be decent, honorable men.

Our behavior in public must be above reproach. Our behavior in private is even

more important. It must clear the standard set by the Lord. We cannot indulge in sin, let alone try to cover our sins. We cannot gratify our pride. We cannot partake of the vanity of unrighteous ambition. We cannot exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon our wives or children or any others in any degree of unrighteousness.

If we do any of these things, the powers of heaven are withdrawn. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved. The very virtue of our priesthood is nullified. Its authority is lost.

The manner of our living, the words we speak, and our everyday behavior have a bearing upon our effectiveness as men and boys holding the priesthood.

### **Parameters for exercising the priesthood**

Our fifth article of faith states, "We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

Even though those in authority lay hands upon our heads and we are ordained, we may through our behavior nullify and forfeit any right to exercise this divine authority.

Section 121 goes on to say:

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile" (D&C 121:41-42).

Now, my brethren, those are the parameters within which this priesthood must find expression. It is not as a cloak that we put on and take off at will. It is, when exercised in righteousness, as the very tissue of our bodies, a part of us at all times and in all circumstances.

### **Young men may have angels minister**

And so, to you young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, you have had conferred upon you that power which holds the keys to the ministering of angels. Think of that for a minute.

You cannot afford to do anything that would place a curtain between you and the ministering of angels in your behalf.

You cannot be immoral in any sense. You cannot be dishonest. You cannot cheat or lie. You cannot take the name of God in vain or use filthy language and still have the right to the ministering of angels.

I do not want you to be self-righteous. I want you to be manly, to be vibrant and strong and happy. To those who are athletically inclined, I want you to be good athletes and strive to become champions. But in doing so, you do not have to indulge in unseemly behavior or profane or filthy language.

To you young men who look forward to going on missions, please do not cloud your lives with anything that would cast a doubt upon your worthiness to go forth as servants of the living God.

### **Warning and counsel to missionaries**

You who are missionaries must not, you cannot under any circumstances compromise the divine power which you carry within you as ordained ministers of the gospel.

By way of warning and forewarning, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have set forth the following statement directed to you:

"As missionaries, you are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct, including strict observance of the law of chastity. . . .

"... You should never be alone with anyone else, male or female, adult or child [other than your assigned companion].

"Even false accusations against an innocent missionary can take many months

to investigate and may result in disruption or termination of missionary service. Protect yourselves from such accusations by never being separated from your companion, even in the homes you visit" (First Presidency statement on missionary conduct, 22 Mar. 2002).

You need not worry about these things if you will at all times observe the rules of missionary service. If you do so, you will have a wonderful experience, and you will return in honor to those you love without taint or suspicion or regret.

When you return home, never forget that you are still an elder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

You will become involved in the search for an eternal companion. You will wish to marry in the house of the Lord. For you there should be no alternative. Be careful, lest you destroy your eligibility to be so married. Have a wonderful time. But keep your courtship within the bounds of rigid self-discipline. The Lord has given a mandate and a promise. He has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." Then there follows the promise that "thy confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God; and . . . the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion" (D&C 121:45-46).

### Warning against wife abuse

The wife you choose will be your equal. Paul declared, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

In the marriage companionship there is neither inferiority nor superiority. The woman does not walk ahead of the man; neither does the man walk ahead of the woman. They walk side by side as a son and daughter of God on an eternal journey.

She is not your servant, your chattel, nor anything of the kind.

How tragic and utterly disgusting a phenomenon is wife abuse. Any man in

this Church who abuses his wife, who demeans her, who insults her, who exercises unrighteous dominion over her is unworthy to hold the priesthood. Though he may have been ordained, the heavens will withdraw, the Spirit of the Lord will be grieved, and it will be amen to the authority of the priesthood of that man.

Any man who engages in this practice is unworthy to hold a temple recommend.

I regret to say that I see too much of this ugly phenomenon. There are men who cuff their wives about, both verbally and physically. What a tragedy when a man demeans the mother of his children.

It is true that there are a few women who abuse their husbands. But I am not speaking to them tonight. I am speaking to the men of this Church, men upon whom the Almighty has bestowed His holy priesthood.

My brethren, if there be any within the sound of my voice who are guilty of such behavior, I call upon you to repent. Get on your knees and ask the Lord to forgive you. Pray to Him for the power to control your tongue and your heavy hand. Ask for the forgiveness of your wife and your children. President McKay was wont to say, "No other success can compensate for failure in the home" (quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [1924], 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116). And President Lee said, "The most important part of the Lord's work that you will do, is the work that you do within the walls of your own home" (Harold B. Lee, *Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [19 Apr. 1961], 5).

I am confident that when we stand before the bar of God, there will be little mention of how much wealth we accumulated in life or of any honors which we may have achieved. But there will be searching questions about our domestic relations. And I am convinced that only those who have walked through life with love and respect and appreciation for their

companions and children will receive from our eternal judge the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

### **Warning against abuse of the elderly**

I mention another type of abuse. It is of the elderly. I think it is not common among us. I hope it is not. I pray that it is not.

I believe our people, almost all of them, observe the ancient commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

But how tragic it is, how absolutely revolting is abuse of the elderly.

More and more we are living longer, thanks to the miracle of modern science and medical practice. But with old age comes a deterioration of physical capacity and sometimes mental capacity. I have said before that I have discovered that there is much of lead in the years that are called golden. I am so profoundly grateful for the love and solicitude of our children toward their mother and their father. How beautiful is the picture of a son or daughter going out of his or her way to assist with kindness and benevolence and love an aged parent.

### **Warning against child abuse**

Now I wish to mention another form of abuse that has been much publicized in the media. It is the sordid and evil abuse of children by adults, usually men. Such abuse is not new. There is evidence to indicate that it goes back through the ages. It is a most despicable and tragic and terrible thing. I regret to say that there has been some very limited expression of this monstrous evil among us. It is something that cannot be countenanced or tolerated. The Lord Himself said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which

believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

That is very strong language from the Prince of Peace, the Son of God.

I quote from our *Church Handbook of Instructions*:

"The Church's position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse . . . are subject to Church discipline. They should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommendation. Even if a person who abused a child sexually or physically receives Church discipline and is later restored to full fellowship or readmitted by baptism, leaders should not call the person to any position working with children or youth unless the First Presidency authorizes removal of the annotation on the person's membership record.

"In instances of abuse, the first responsibility of the Church is to help those who have been abused and to protect those who may be vulnerable to future abuse" (*Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* [1998], 157-58).

For a long period now we have worked on this problem. We have urged bishops, stake presidents, and others to reach out to victims, to comfort them, to strengthen them, to let them know that what happened was wrong, that the experience was not their fault, and that it need never happen again.

We have issued publications, established a telephone line where Church officers may receive counsel in handling cases, and offered professional help through LDS Family Services.

These acts are often criminal in their nature. They are punishable under the law. Professional counselors, including lawyers and social workers, are available on this help line to advise bishops and stake presidents concerning their obligations in these circumstances. Those in other nations should call their respective Area Presidents.

Now the work of the Church is a work of salvation. I want to emphasize that. It is a work of saving souls. We desire to help both the victim and the offender. Our hearts reach out to the victim, and we must act to assist him or her. Our hearts reach out to the offender, but we cannot tolerate the sin of which he may be guilty. Where there has been offense, there is a penalty. The process of the civil law will work its way. And the ecclesiastical process will work its way, often resulting in excommunication. This is both a delicate and a serious matter.

Nevertheless, we recognize, and must always recognize, that when the penalty has been paid and the demands of justice have been met, there will be a helpful and kindly hand reaching out to assist. There may be continuing restrictions, but there will also be kindness.

#### **Safeguard and cherish the priesthood**

Now brethren, I suppose that I have sounded negative as I have spoken to you this evening. I do not wish to. But I do

wish to raise a warning voice to the priesthood of this Church throughout the world.

God has bestowed upon us a gift most precious and wonderful. It carries with it the authority to govern the Church, to administer in its affairs, to speak with authority in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to act as His dedicated servants, to bless the sick, to bless our families and many others. It serves as a guide by which to live our lives. In its fulness, its authority reaches beyond the veil of death into the eternities that lie ahead.

There is nothing else to compare with it in all this world. Safeguard it, cherish it, love it, live worthy of it.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), is my humble prayer as I leave my blessing upon you and extend my love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Hope of Israel."

Elder L. Edward Brown offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 7, 2002. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

#### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 172nd Annual General Conference

of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities that are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise" and will now favor us with "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father." The invocation will be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, and the choir will then sing "Adam-ondi-Ahman." Following the singing, President James E. Faust,

Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Adam-ondi-Ahman."

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## President James E. Faust

### The lifeline of prayer

This morning I bear witness of the importance of prayer. Access to our Creator through our Savior is surely one of the great privileges and blessings of our lives. I have learned from countless personal experiences that great is the power of prayer. No earthly authority can separate us from direct access to our Creator. There can never be a mechanical or electronic failure when we pray. There is no limit on the number of times or how long we can pray each day. There is no quota of how many needs we wish to pray for in each prayer. We do not need to go through secretaries or make an appointment to reach the throne of grace. He is reachable at any time and any place.

When God placed man on the earth, prayer became the lifeline between mankind and God. Thus, in Adam's generation, men began "to call upon the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Through all generations since that time, prayer has filled a very important human need. Each of us has problems that we cannot solve and weaknesses that we cannot conquer without reaching out through prayer to a higher source of strength. That source is the God of heaven, to whom we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> As we pray we should think of our Father in Heaven as possessing all knowledge, understanding, love, and compassion.

### Explanation of what prayer is

What is a prayer? The Savior gave us an example in the Lord's Prayer when He prayed:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."<sup>3</sup>

First, prayer is a humble acknowledgment that God is our Father and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer.

Second, it is a sincere confession of sin and transgression and a request for forgiveness.

Third, it is recognition that we need help beyond our own ability.

Fourth, it is an opportunity to express thanksgiving and gratitude to our Creator. It is important that we frequently say, "We thank Thee . . .," "We acknowledge before Thee . . .," "We are grateful unto Thee. . ."

Fifth, it is a privilege to ask Deity for specific blessings.

## Prayer requires sincerity and effort

Many prayers are spoken while we are on our knees. The Savior knelt as He prayed to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>4</sup> But silent prayers of the heart also reach to heaven. We sing, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, / Uttered or unexpressed."<sup>5</sup> Sincere prayers come from the heart. Indeed, sincerity requires that we draw from the earnest feelings of our hearts when we pray rather than using vain repetitions or pretentious affectations such as those condemned by the Savior in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.<sup>6</sup> Our prayers then truly become the "song of the heart" and "a prayer,"<sup>7</sup> not only reaching God but touching the hearts of others as well.

Jeremiah counsels us to pray with all our heart and soul.<sup>8</sup> Enos recounted how his soul had hungered and that he had prayed all the day long.<sup>9</sup> Prayers vary in their intensity. Even the Savior "prayed more earnestly" in His hour of agony.<sup>10</sup> Some are simple expressions of appreciation and requests for a continuation of blessings on our loved ones and us. However, in times of great personal hurt or need, more may be required than mere asking. The Lord said, "You have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me."<sup>11</sup> Blessings sought through prayer sometimes require work, effort, and diligence on our part.

For example, at times fasting is appropriate as a strong evidence of our sincerity. As Alma testified to the people of Zarahemla: "I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit."<sup>12</sup> When we fast we humble our souls,<sup>13</sup> which brings us more in tune with God and His holy purposes.

## Amulek's counsel about prayer

We are privileged to pray daily for the small and great concerns in our lives. Consider the words of Amulek, who admonished us to pray in our fields over our flocks; in our houses over our households, morning, midday, and evening; to pray against the power of our enemies and the devil; to cry unto Him over our crops; to pour out our souls in secret and in the wilderness. When we are not crying directly unto God, we should let our hearts be drawn out in prayer unto Him continually.<sup>14</sup>

Amulek's counsel in our day might be the heartfelt prayer of a wife: "Bless Jason and keep him safe as he serves our country in this time of war." The prayer of a mother: "Please bless dear Jane that she will make the right choices." The prayer of a father: "Heavenly Father, bless Johnny in his missionary labors, that doors will be opened for him, and that he'll find the honest in heart." The lisping, basic prayer of a child "that I won't be naughty today" or "that everybody will have plenty to eat" or "that Mommy will get well soon"—these are sublime prayers that resound in the eternal mansions above. God knows our needs better than we can state them,<sup>15</sup> but He wants us to approach Him in faith to ask for blessings, safety, and comfort.

## Prayers on a ship during World War II

I have mentioned before an experience I had in the military in World War II. I hasten to say I was not a hero. But I did my duty. I endured and survived. I was assigned to a British liberty ship sailing from San Francisco to Suez. I was on that ship for 83 consecutive days except for a brief stop in Auckland, New Zealand. I was the only member of our faith on board. On Sundays I would go alone to the bow of the ship with my little set of servicemen's scriptures and songbook. Amid the howl-



ing of the wind, I would read the scriptures, pray, and sing all by myself. I did not try to bargain with the Lord, but I did pray fervently that if I could survive the war and go home to my wife and family, I would earnestly try to remain true to the sacred covenants I had made at baptism, to the oath and covenant of the priesthood, and to my temple vows.

As part of our tour of duty, our little cargo ship was ordered to tow a large, burned-out oil tanker into Auckland, New Zealand. The tanker had no power and was wallowing helplessly in the ocean. Although we never saw them, we knew enemy submarines were lurking near us. While we were pulling that ship, we were caught in a violent storm, which we later learned sank many vessels. Because of the load we were pulling, we did not have enough power to go into the giant waves head-on, and our ship was thrown from side to side in the trough of the pounding seas. It would creak and groan and roll from side to side, almost capsizing on every roll. Of course I prayed, as I imagine others did. In time the storm moved away from us. I am grateful for the sustaining influence and comfort my prayers gave me then and since in other times of peril.

### **Importance of family prayer**

The Savior told us, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed."<sup>16</sup> In our day, the Church urges us to have family prayer every night and every morning.

I once heard of someone who asked a little boy if he said his prayers every night.

"Yes," he replied.

"And you always say them in the morning too?"

"No," the boy replied. "I ain't scared in the daytime."<sup>17</sup>

Fear of the dark should not be our only motivation to pray, morning or night.

Family prayer is a powerful and sustaining influence. During the dark days of World War II, a 500-pound bomb fell outside the little home of Brother Patey, a young father in Liverpool, England, but the bomb did not go off. His wife had died, so he was rearing his five children alone. He gathered them together at this very anxious time for family prayer. They "all prayed . . . earnestly and when they had finished praying, the children said: 'Daddy, we will be all right. We will be all right in our home tonight.'"

"And so they went to bed, imagine, with that terrific bomb lying just outside the door half submerged in the ground. If it had gone off it would have destroyed probably forty or fifty houses and killed two or three hundred people. . . ."

"The next morning the . . . whole neighborhood was removed for forty-eight hours and the bomb was finally taken away. . . ."

"On the way back Brother Patey asked the foreman of the A.R.P. Squad: 'Well, what did you find?'"

"'Mr. Patey, we got at the bomb outside of your door and found it ready to explode at any moment. There was nothing wrong with it. We are puzzled why it did not go off.'"<sup>18</sup> Miraculous things happen when families pray together.

### **The Prophet Joseph's example of prayer**

The Savior counseled that we should pray for those who "despitefully use" us.<sup>19</sup> This principle is often overlooked in our prayers. The Prophet Joseph Smith understood it clearly. His petitions were fervent, his motives pure, and the blessings of heaven regular.

Daniel Tyler, an associate of the Prophet, recalled an important occasion:

"At the time William Smith and others rebelled against the Prophet [at Kirtland], . . . I attended a meeting . . . where 'Joseph' presided. Entering the school-

house a little before [the] meeting opened, and gazing upon the man of God, I perceived sadness in his countenance and tears trickling down his cheeks. . . . A few moments later a hymn was sung and he opened the meeting by prayer. Instead, however, of facing the audience, he turned his back and bowed upon his knees, facing the wall. This, I suppose, was done to hide his sorrow and tears.

"I had heard men and women pray—especially the former—from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent, but never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though He was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. Joseph was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, which was to a considerable extent in behalf of those who accused him of having gone astray and fallen into sin, [was] that the Lord would forgive them and open their eyes that they might see aright—that prayer, I say, to my humble mind, partook of the learning and eloquence of heaven. There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though, in case the veil were taken away, I could see the Lord standing facing His humblest of all servants I had ever seen. . . . It was the crowning . . . of all the prayers I ever heard."<sup>20</sup>

### The Savior's prayers

As the hour of the Savior's death and resurrection drew near, He offered His great Intercessory Prayer. After commending His Apostles to the Father and praying for them, He then prayed for all those who would believe on Him through their word, and He pleaded with the Father for all of us. He prayed that we could all be one as He is one with the Father and that the world would believe that He was sent by the Father.<sup>21</sup>

No more poignant prayer was ever uttered than that given by the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane. He withdrew from His Apostles, knelt, and prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."<sup>22</sup> An important element of all of our prayers might well be to follow the pattern of that prayer in Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done." By this, then, we acknowledge our devotion and submission to the overriding purposes of the Lord in our lives. As He said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."<sup>23</sup> What a glorious day it will be for each of us when we pray with confidence that "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."<sup>24</sup>

I sincerely hope that as we say our daily prayers we remember to ask the Lord's blessings to continue to abide with our beloved leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley. No one fully knows, not even his counselors, how heavy his burdens are and how great his responsibility is. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Genesis 4:26.
2. See 2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 20:31.
3. Matthew 6:9–13.
4. See Luke 22:41.
5. *Hymns*, no. 145.
6. See Luke 18:10–14.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
8. See Jeremiah 29:13.
9. See Enos 1:4.
10. Luke 22:44.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:7.
12. Alma 5:46.
13. See Psalm 35:13.
14. See Alma 34:20–27.
15. See Matthew 6:8.
16. 3 Nephi 18:21.
17. Adapted from Tal D. Bonham, *The Treasury of Clean Church Jokes*, as quoted in Cal and Rose Samra, eds., *Holy Humor* (1997), 23.

18. Andre K. Anastasiou, in Conference Report, Oct. 1946, 26.
19. Matthew 5:44.
20. *Juvenile Instructor*, Feb. 1892, 127–28.
21. See John 17.
22. Luke 22:42.
23. John 15:7.
24. 1 John 5:14.

### President Hinckley

We will now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### The prodigal son

Among the most memorable parables the Savior ever told is the story of a foolish younger brother who went to his father, asked for his portion of the estate, and left home to squander his inheritance, the scripture says, in “riotous living.”<sup>1</sup> His money and his friends disappeared sooner than he thought possible—they always do—and a day of terrible reckoning came thereafter—it always does. In the downward course of all this he became a keeper of pigs, one so hungry, so stripped of sustenance and dignity that he “would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.” But even that consolation was not available to him.

Then the scripture says encouragingly, “He came to himself.” He determined to find his way home, hoping to be accepted at least as a servant in his father’s household. The tender image of this boy’s anxious, faithful father running to meet him and showering him with kisses is one of the most moving and compassionate scenes in all of holy writ. It tells every child of God, wayward or otherwise, how much God wants us back in the protection of His arms.

### The other prodigal

But being caught up in this younger son’s story, we can miss, if we are not careful, the account of an elder son, for the opening line of the Savior’s account reads, “A certain man had *two* sons”—and He

might have added, “both of whom were lost and both of whom needed to come home.”

The younger son has returned, and a robe has been placed on his shoulders and a ring on his finger when the older son comes on the scene. He has been dutifully, loyally working in the field, and now he is returning. The language of parallel journeys home, though from very different locations, is central to this story.

As he approaches the house, he hears the sounds of music and laughter.

“And he called one of the servants [note that he has servants], and asked what these things meant.

“And [the servant] said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

“And [the older brother] was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”

You know the conversation they then had. Surely, for this father, the pain over a wayward child who had run from home and wallowed with swine is now compounded with the realization that this older, wiser brother, the younger boy’s childhood hero as older brothers always are, is angry that his brother has come home.

No, I correct myself. This son is not so much angry that the other has come home as he is angry that his parents are so happy about it. Feeling unappreciated and perhaps more than a little self-pity,

this dutiful son—and he is *wonderfully* dutiful—forgets for a moment that he has never had to know filth or despair, fear or self-loathing. He forgets for a moment that every calf on the ranch is already his and so are all the robes in the closet and every ring in the drawer. He forgets for a moment that his faithfulness has been and always will be rewarded.

No, he who has virtually everything, and who has in his hardworking, wonderful way earned it, lacks the one thing that might make him the complete man of the Lord he nearly is. He has yet to come to the compassion and mercy, the charitable breadth of vision to see that *this is not a rival returning*. It is his brother. As his father pled with him to see, it is one who was dead and now is alive. It is one who was lost and now is found.

### Feeling diminished by others' success

Certainly this younger brother had been a prisoner—a prisoner of sin, stupidity, and a pigsty. But the older brother lives in some confinement too. He has, as yet, been unable to break out of the prison of himself. He is haunted by the green-eyed monster of jealousy.<sup>2</sup> He feels taken for granted by his father and disenfranchised by his brother, when neither is the case. He has fallen victim to a fictional affront. As such he is like Tantalus of Greek mythology—he is up to his chin in water, but he remains thirsty nevertheless. One who has heretofore presumably been very happy with his life and content with his good fortune suddenly feels very unhappy simply because another has had some good fortune as well.

Who is it that whispers so subtly in our ear that a gift given to another somehow diminishes the blessings we have received? Who makes us feel that if God is smiling on another, then He surely must somehow be frowning on us? You and I both know who does this—it is the father of all lies.<sup>3</sup> It is Lucifer, our common enemy, whose cry down through the corri-

dors of time is always and to everyone, "Give me thine honor."<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that envy is the one sin to which no one readily confesses, but just how widespread that tendency can be is suggested in the old Danish proverb, "If envy were a fever, all the world would be ill." The parson in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* laments it because it is so far-reaching—it can resent anything, including any virtue and talent, and it can be offended by everything, including every goodness and joy.<sup>5</sup> As others seem to grow larger in our sight, we think we must therefore be smaller. So, unfortunately, we occasionally act that way.

### God doesn't measure us against others

How does this happen, especially when we wish so much that it would not? I think one of the reasons is that every day we see allurements of one kind or another that tell us what we have is not enough. Someone or something is forever telling us we need to be more handsome or more wealthy, more applauded or more admired than we see ourselves as being. We are told we haven't collected enough possessions or gone to enough fun places. We are bombarded with the message that on the *world's* scale of things we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.<sup>6</sup> Some days it is as if we have been locked in a cubicle of a great and spacious building where the only thing on the TV is a never-ending soap opera entitled *Vain Imaginations*.<sup>7</sup>

But God does not work this way. The father in this story does not tantalize his children. He does not mercilessly measure them against their neighbors. He doesn't even compare them with each other. His gestures of compassion toward one do not require a withdrawal or denial of love for the other. He is divinely generous to both of these sons. Toward both of his children he extends charity. I believe God is with us the way my precious wife, Pat, is with my singing. She is a gifted musician, some-

thing of a musical genius, but I couldn't capture a musical note with Velcro. And yet I know she loves me in a very special way when I try to sing. I know that because I can see it in her eyes. They are the eyes of love.

One observer has written: "In a world that constantly compares people, ranking them as more or less intelligent, more or less attractive, more or less successful, it is not easy to really believe in a [divine] love that does not do the same. When I hear someone praised," he says, "it is hard not to think of myself as less praiseworthy; when I read about the goodness and kindness of other people, it is hard not to wonder whether I myself am as good and kind as they; and when I see trophies, rewards, and prizes being handed out to special people, I cannot avoid asking myself why that didn't happen to me."<sup>8</sup>

If this inclination is left unresisted, we can see how it, so embellished by the world, will ultimately bring a resentful, demeaning view of God and a terribly destructive view of ourselves. Most "thou shalt not" commandments are meant to keep us from hurting others, but I am convinced the commandment not to covet is meant to keep us from hurting ourselves.

### Overcoming the tendency to envy and covet

How can we overcome such a tendency so common in almost everyone? For one thing, we can do as these two sons did and start making our way back to the Father. We should do so with as much haste and humility as we can summon. Along the way we can count our many blessings and we can applaud the accomplishments of others. Best of all, we can serve others, the finest exercise for the heart ever prescribed. But finally these will not be enough. When we are lost, we can "come to ourselves," but we may not always be able to "find ourselves," and, worlds without end, we cannot "save ourselves." Only the Father and His Only Begotten Son can do that. Salvation is in Them only. So

we pray that They will help us, that They will "come out" to meet and embrace us and bring us into the feast They have prepared.

They will do this! The scriptures are replete with the promise that God's grace is sufficient.<sup>9</sup> This is one arena where no one has to claw or compete. Nephi declares that the Lord "loveth the [whole] world" and has given salvation freely.

"Hath [he] commanded *any* that they should *not* partake of his goodness?" Nephi asks. No! "All . . . are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden [at his hand]."

"Come unto me all ye ends of the earth," He pleads, and buy milk without money and honey without price.<sup>10</sup> *All are privileged, the one like unto the other.* Walk peacefully. Walk confidently. Walk without fear and without envy. Be reassured of Heavenly Father's abundance to you always.

As we do this, we can help others, calling down blessings on them even as they make supplication for us. We can cheer every talent and ability, wherever it is bestowed, thus making life here more nearly what it will be like in heaven.

### "The greatest of these is charity"

It will help us always to remember Paul's succinct prioritizing of virtues—"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."<sup>11</sup> He reminds us we are *all* of the body of Christ, and that *all* members, whether comely or feeble, are adored, essential, and important. We feel the depth of his plea that there be "no schism in the body; but that the members . . . have the same care one for another. And [when] one member suffer[s], all the members suffer with it; or [when] one member [is] honoured, all the members rejoice."<sup>12</sup> That incomparable counsel helps us remember that the word *generosity* has the same derivation as the word *genealogy*, both coming from the Latin *genus*, meaning of the same birth or

kind, the same family or gender.<sup>13</sup> We will always find it easier to be generous when we remember that this person being favored is truly one of our own.

### **The race is against sin, not each other**

Brothers and sisters, I testify that no one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. He doesn't measure our talents or our looks; He doesn't measure our professions or our possessions. He cheers on *every* runner, calling out that the race is against sin, *not* against each other. I know that if we will be faithful, there is a perfectly tailored robe of righteousness ready and waiting for *everyone*,<sup>14</sup> "robes . . . made . . . white in the blood of the Lamb."<sup>15</sup> May we encourage each other in our effort to win that prize is my earnest prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. See Luke 15:11–32; italics added.
2. See William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 3, scene 2, line 110.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:18.
4. Moses 4:1.
5. See Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Persones Tale," in *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (1929), 534–35.
6. See Daniel 5:27 (double entendre doubly intended).
7. See 1 Nephi 12:18.
8. Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992), 103.
9. See Ether 12:26; Moroni 10:32; Doctrine and Covenants 17:8.
10. See 2 Nephi 26:24–28; italics added.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
12. See 1 Corinthians 12:25–26.
13. I am indebted to Henri Nouwen for pointing out this etymological link; see *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 131–32.
14. See Isaiah 61:10; 2 Nephi 4:33; 9:14.
15. Revelation 7:14.

## **Bishop Richard C. Edgley**

### **Comforting those with heavy burdens**

Some time ago I received an anonymous letter from a heartbroken mother expressing her suffering and pain for a son who had committed grievous transgressions, badly hurting innocent loved ones.

Since her anonymous letter to me, and feeling her despair, I have had a great desire to express my love to her and others in similar circumstances in an attempt to give some comfort and hope to those who are anonymously and privately carrying heavy burdens, often known only to them and a loving Father in Heaven.

I know, Sister Anonymous, that what I say will only be a reminder, but still another testimony to what you already know.

### **God's plan puts trials in perspective**

When the Prophet Joseph Smith, suffering what had to be one of his darkest moments while confined to the dungeon called Liberty Jail, cried out, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1), the Lord comforted him with these words: "Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7). How difficult it is and painfully foreign it may seem to find the good out of our personal tragedy and suffering. How inconsistent the words "for thy good" may seem.

However, an understanding of Christ's plan of redemption helps put it all into perspective. In our preexistent state our

Father in Heaven presented His plan for mortality, which Alma described as the "plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). I believe we all understood that by coming to earth, we would be exposed to all of the experiences of earth life, including the not-so-pleasant trials of pain, suffering, hopelessness, sin, and death. There would be opposition and adversity.

If that was all we knew about the plan, I doubt if any of us would have embraced it, rejoicing, "That's what I have always wanted—pain, suffering, hopelessness, sin, and death." But it all came into focus, and it became acceptable, even desirable, when an Elder Brother stepped forward and offered that He would go down and make it all right. Out of pain and suffering He would bring peace. Out of hopelessness He would bring hope. Out of transgression He would bring repentance and forgiveness. Out of death He would bring the resurrection of lives. And with that explanation and most generous offer, each and every one of us concluded, "I can do that. That is a risk worth taking." And so we chose.

The unfathomable extent of Christ's mercy and His Atonement are explained by Amulek in the 34th chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon. Amulek explains that there must be a "great and last sacrifice" (Alma 34:10). And then he clarifies that this cannot be a sacrifice of beast or fowl similar to those already known to man. It had to be a sacrifice of a God—Jesus Christ. For this must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. And so the sacrifice was made, and by faith we find ourselves traveling this journey we call mortality. As a result, our hearts are saddened with the unexplained loss of a child or the supposed untimely illness or disability of a loved one. Single parents struggle to provide financial security and the reassuring influences of the gospel in their home. And maybe most difficult of all is the pain experienced of helplessly watching the

suffering of a loved one because of sin and transgression.

### **Have the same faith as when we first chose**

There are few of us, if any, who don't walk the refiner's fire of adversity and despair, sometimes known to others but for many quietly hidden and privately endured. Most of the heartache, pain, and suffering we would not choose today. But we did choose. We chose when we could see the complete plan. We chose when we had a clear vision of the Savior's rescue of us. And if our faith and understanding were as clear today as it was when we first made that choice, I believe we would choose again.

Therefore, perhaps the challenge is to have the kind of faith during the hard times that we exercised when we first chose; the kind of faith that turns questioning and even anger into acknowledging the power, blessings, and hope that can come only from Him who is the source of all power, blessings, and hope; the kind of faith that brings the knowledge and assurances that all that we experience is part of the gospel plan and that for the righteous, all that appears wrong will eventually be made right. The peace and understanding to endure with dignity and clarity of purpose can be the sweet reward. This kind of faith can help us to see the good, even when life's path seems to be layered only with thorns, thistles, and craggy rocks.

### **Response to trials manifests works of God**

When Jesus and His disciples passed a man who was blind since his birth, His disciples queried:

"Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2–3).

I do not believe our Father in Heaven causes the tragedies and heartbreak in our lives. But as the “works of God” were made manifest in the healing of a blind man, so also the way we face our personal trials may manifest the “works of God.”

From our sorrow we might seek out the sweetness and the good that are often associated with and peculiar to our challenge. We can seek out those memorable moments that are frequently hidden by the pain and agony. We can find peace in extending ourselves to others, using our own experiences to provide hope and comfort. And we can always remember with great solemnity and gratitude Him who suffered most to make it all right for us. And by so doing we can be strengthened to bear our burdens in peace. And then the “works of God” might be manifest.

### Atonement gives hope to the suffering

In speaking of Christ’s Atonement, I like the dictionary’s definitions of *infinite* and *eternal* because I believe they explain exactly what God meant. *Infinite*: “Having no boundaries or limits.” And the definition of *eternal*: “Being without beginning or end” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. [2000], “infinite,” “eternal,” 898, 611).

Do you see, Sister Anonymous? That means the Atonement was for you in your suffering. It is personal, as He is intimately acquainted with your trials and sorrows, for He has already suffered them. It means there can always be a new beginning for every one of us—even a son who has committed serious transgressions. It means that as we move ahead through life’s trials and tribulations, shackled with feelings of hopelessness, we focus not on where we have been but where we are going. We focus not on what has been but on what can be.

### “All these things . . . shall be for thy good”

Admittedly, most of us would rather learn the hard lessons of life in the secure comfort of a Sunday School class or in the radiant warmth of a fireplace during a family home evening. But may I point out, it was from the cold, dark corners of Liberty Jail that came some of the most beautiful, comforting scriptures given to man, concluding with the words, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” Likewise, out of our adversity we might seek our greatest triumphs, and the day may well come that from our challenges we will understand the familiar words “for thy good.”

From the scriptures we learn that when the Savior went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pay the ultimate price for our transgressions and our suffering, He bled from every pore (see D&C 19). I believe, Sister Anonymous, that in His excruciating pain, He bled a drop of blood for you. He bled a drop for your son, and He bled a drop for me.

I believe in prayer. I believe in faith. I believe in repentance. I believe in the power of the Redemption. And yes, Sister Anonymous, I believe in you. And so does a loving Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

The choir and congregation will now sing “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Sister Gayle M. Clegg, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us. She will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “Where Can I Turn for Peace?”

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The choir and congregation sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

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## Sister Gayle M. Clegg

### A six-year-old prays and is comforted

When I was a young mother, my husband and I found ourselves taking our five children under the age of eight to live in South America. Although none of us spoke the language, my six-year-old had the greatest difficulty learning a new language. We decided to put her in preschool with four-year-olds, even though she should be starting first grade. Our hope was that interaction with younger children would be less intimidating to her and might facilitate her ability to communicate in Portuguese.

But the reality for my daughter was that she was as foreign to the children as they were to her. Each day was a struggle, and I anguished for her every morning as I walked her to school and then waited for her to return, dejected, at the end of the day.

One day some children were particularly unkind to her. A few even threw rocks and bullied her, laughing rudely at recess. She was scared and hurt and decided she couldn't go back into class. Sitting alone while the playground emptied, she remembered what we had taught her about loneliness. She remembered that Heavenly Father is always close to His children and she could speak to Him at any time, not just before bedtime. He would understand the language of her heart. In a corner of the playground, she bowed her head and said a prayer. She didn't know what to pray for, so she asked that her father and mother could be with her to protect her. While she was returning to the classroom, a Primary song came into her mind:

I often go walking in meadows of  
clover,  
And I gather armfuls of blossoms of  
blue.  
I gather the blossoms the whole  
meadow over;

Dear mother, all flowers remind me  
of you.

[“I Often Go Walking,” *Children’s Songbook*, 202]

As she opened her eyes, she noticed one little flower growing between the cracks of the cement. She picked it up and put it into her pocket. Her troubles with the other children did not disappear, but she walked back into the school feeling that her parents were with her.

### Universal language of an answered prayer

Each of us, like my six-year-old daughter, has felt lost or alienated in a foreign land. Perhaps your foreign land was learning the language of algebra or chemistry. Maybe you thought you had come to a foreign shore when you joined the Church, even if you joined in your native country. Put yourself in the place of a new convert. Words like *calling*, *Presiding Bishopric*, and even *General Authority* require a glossary entry.

What about our missionaries who have understood and responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit that the Church is true, but then have had the challenge of learning both the gospel and a foreign language at the same time? I marvel to think of their courage.

Our lives are filled with many instances of the frustration of learning a foreign tongue. Nevertheless, there is one language that is universal. “Dear mother, all flowers remind me of you” spoke to the heart of a young girl. A Primary song and a wildflower were the familiar language of an answered prayer.

### Jesus blesses and angels encircle children

After Jesus had been teaching for some time at the temple in Bountiful, He perceived the people did not understand all the words He spoke. He asked them to

go to their homes and ponder and pray with their families and prepare for Him to come the next day.

But when "he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, [he] beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. . . .

"He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them. . . .

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

"And as they looked . . . they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, . . . and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:5, 21, 23-24).

To "encircle" with the fire of our testimony is a language all of us must learn to speak and understand.

### Report card affirms a boy's strengths

The first lesson taught to every child in the world attending Primary is "I Am a Child of God." Children as young as 18 months might be pointing to themselves, acting out this finger play:

Heavenly Father knows me  
And what I like to do.  
He knows my name and where I live.  
I know He loves me, too.

["Heavenly Father Knows Me," in *Primary 1: I Am a Child of God* (1994), 2]

When I was teaching sixth grade a number of years ago, a 14-year-old boy dressed in gang attire was marched into my classroom. He was two years older and four years larger than the other 30 students. Quickly I discovered Brian did not read, had not attended school with any regularity, and had lived with a variety of guardians in a number of cities.

Report card time was coming up, and I came to school on my day off to finish recording the children's work and mark

the report cards. As I entered the classroom to gather up the records, I could see Brian had the class in an upheaval. I suggested to my grateful co-teacher that I would take Brian with me. With some first-grade primers filled with pictures, we headed to the library, talking a little football on the way.

We settled ourselves at a table where I was marking report cards. I asked him if he had ever had a report card.

He shook his head and said, "No." I asked if he would like a report card.

He looked directly at me. "Only if it said I was a good boy."

I made out a special card for him, emphasizing his strengths. I wrote his full name on it and his ability to include everyone and make people laugh. I specifically mentioned his love of sports. It was not a traditional report card but seemed to please him. Not too long after that, Brian disappeared from our school, and the last I heard of him, he was living in another state. I hoped he had my report card saying that he was a good boy in his pocket, wherever he was.

Someday we will all be given final report cards. Maybe we will be graded on how well we have reported each other's goodness. Every child needs regular reports affirming, "You are known. You are valued. You have potential. You are good."

### A wagon driver helps a pioneer girl

I love the stories of pioneer children. We always hear about their parents walking to the Salt Lake Valley. But in the words of a Primary song:

Whenever I think about pioneers,  
I think of brave women and men.  
I like to remember that children came,  
too;

I would like to have been a child then.  
["Whenever I Think about Pioneers," *Children's Songbook*, 222]

Susan Madsen tells the story of Agnes Caldwell in the Willie handcart company. They were caught in heavy storms and suffered terrible hunger and cold. Relief wagons came to deliver food and blankets, but there were not enough wagons to carry all the people. Even after rescue, the majority of the people still had to trudge on many more miles to the safety of the valley.

Little nine-year-old Agnes was too weary to walk any farther. The driver took notice of her determination to keep up with the wagon and asked if she would like a ride. She tells in her own words what happened next:

"At this he reached over, taking my hand, clucking to his horses to make me run, with legs that . . . could run no farther. On we went, to what to me seemed miles. What went through my head at that time was that he was the meanest man that ever lived or that I had ever heard of. . . . Just at what seemed the breaking point, he stopped [and pulled me into the wagon]. Taking a blanket, he wrapped me up . . . , warm and comfortable. Here I had time to change my mind, as I surely did, knowing full well by doing this he saved me from freezing when taken into the wagon" (in *I Walked to Zion* [1994], 59).

The driver of that relief wagon made the little girl run as far and as fast as she could to push blood back into her frozen feet and legs. He saved her legs, possibly her life, by letting her help herself.

Our children today have journeys as terrible and taxing as the westward migration. They are faced with every calamity along the trail. We need to build their backs to bear their burdens and build

their legs for dancing under starry skies. Sometimes we must run to keep up with our children's faith.

### Speak the language of love to children

Another time in 3 Nephi when Christ was blessing the disciples, "his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them" (3 Nephi 19:25).

A smiling countenance says you are good. Children are trying to be like Jesus. They want to be like someone who smiles. They want to be with someone who responds to them joyfully.

President Hinckley has said: "Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

This should be the language of gospel instruction to our children. Whatever your mother tongue, learn to teach and speak in the language of heartfelt prayers and joyful testimony so that angels, earthly and heavenly, can encircle and minister to us. We need gospel mentors who speak the language of praise and friendship. We need to give regular spiritual report cards that affirm our goodness in each other's eyes. It is a blessing to allow children to run as far as they can under their own power, to build strength for their own testimonies, and we should smile upon them and wrap them in the blanket of our affection throughout the great journey in the universal language of love.

I give thanks for the great blessing to "behold [our] little ones." I like to remember that children come too, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### Out of darkness into His marvelous light

Isaiah, a great prophet of the Old Testament, prophesied, "And it shall come to

pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it."<sup>1</sup> Referring to the

citizens of those nations, President John Taylor said, "They will come, saying, we do not know anything of the principles of your religion, but we perceive that you are an honest community; you administer justice and righteousness."<sup>2</sup>

As Salt Lake City has hosted the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have seen a partial fulfillment of many prophecies. The nations of the earth and many of their leaders have come. They have seen us serving alongside our friends in this community and our neighbors of other faiths. They have seen the light in our eyes and felt the clasp of our hands. "The mountain of the house of the Lord,"<sup>3</sup> with its brightly lit spires, has been witnessed by 3.5 billion people around the world. The nations have heard the glorious sound of this Tabernacle Choir. Hundreds of thousands have attended a live production in this auditorium entitled *The Light of the World: A Celebration of Life—Spirit of Man, Glory of God*, which included a declaration of our belief in Jesus Christ. I humbly express gratitude that by these and many other means, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to be brought "forth out of obscurity and out of darkness."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the Olympics there have been many expressions of light, such as the Olympic flame; the child of light; and the theme, "Light the Fire Within."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most memorable light was found in the eyes of the competitors themselves. But what moved us most was not the competition or the spectacle. It was the deeper truth these things symbolized—the source of the light within each of us.

This morning I speak to those who asked, "What was that light I saw and felt? Where did it come from? How can I have it for myself and my loved ones always?"

### Light of Christ and gift of the Holy Ghost

Each of us brings a light to the earth—the Light of Christ. "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into

the world,"<sup>6</sup> the Savior said. Through Him comes "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things."<sup>7</sup>

This light, which "inviteth and enticeth to do good continually,"<sup>8</sup> is "given to every man, that he may know good from evil."<sup>9</sup>

By using the Light of Christ to discern and choose what is right, we can be led to an even greater light: the gift of the Holy Ghost. I testify that through the restoration of the gospel and the holy priesthood of God, disciples of Jesus Christ in these latter days have the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is bestowed by the laying on of hands by those who have the authority of the priesthood, and it is received by those who have followed the principles of faith and repentance and have received the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, a personage of spirit.<sup>10</sup> He is the Comforter, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of Promise. He testifies of Jesus Christ, His work, and the work of His servants upon the earth. He acts as a cleansing agent to purify and sanctify us from sin.<sup>11</sup> He comforts us and brings peace to our souls. The right to His constant companionship is among the greatest gifts we can receive in mortality, for by the light of His promptings and His cleansing power we can be led back into the presence of God.<sup>12</sup>

### Light dispels darkness

As children, we learned how to keep darkness away by turning on a light. Sometimes when our parents went away for the evening, we would turn on every light in the house! We understood the physical law that is also a spiritual law: light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Light dispels darkness. When light is present, darkness is vanquished and must depart. More importantly, darkness cannot conquer light unless the light is dimin-

ished or departs. When the spiritual light of the Holy Ghost is present, the darkness of Satan departs.

Beloved young men and young women of the Church, we are engaged in a battle between the forces of light and darkness. If it were not for the Light of Jesus Christ and His gospel, we would be doomed to the destruction of darkness. But the Savior said, "I am come a light into the world."<sup>13</sup> "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>14</sup>

The Lord is our light and, literally, our salvation.<sup>15</sup> Like the sacred fire that encircled the children in 3 Nephi,<sup>16</sup> His light will form a protective shield between you and the darkness of the adversary as you live worthy of it. You need that light. We need that light. Carefully study the scriptures and *For the Strength of Youth* and listen to the teachings of your parents and leaders. Then, by obedience to wise counsel, learn to claim the protective light of the gospel as your own.

You may wonder, "How can I do that?" There is only one way: you must learn to generate that light each day by believing on Jesus Christ and following His commandments.

### Generating the light by daily pedaling

This past winter I had the opportunity to learn more about my lungs. I became very aware that we cannot store oxygen. We cannot save the air we need to breathe, no matter how hard we try. Moment by moment, breath by breath, our lives are granted to us and are renewed. So it is with spiritual light. It must be renewed in us on a regular basis. We must generate it day by day, thought by thought, and with daily righteous action if we are to keep the darkness of the adversary away.

When I was a boy, I used to ride my bicycle home from basketball practice at night. I would connect a small pear-shaped generator to my bicycle tire. Then as I pedaled, the tire would turn a tiny rotor,

which produced electricity and emitted a single, welcome beam of light. It was a simple but effective mechanism. But I had to pedal to make it work! I learned quickly that if I stopped pedaling my bicycle, the light would go out. I also learned that when I was "anxiously engaged"<sup>17</sup> in pedaling, the light would become brighter and the darkness in front of me would be dispelled.

The generation of spiritual light comes from daily spiritual pedaling. It comes from praying, studying the scriptures, fasting, and serving—from living the gospel and obeying the commandments. "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light,"<sup>18</sup> said the Lord, "and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, that perfect day will be when we will stand in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people ask, "Why do I have to go to sacrament meeting? Why do I have to live the Word of Wisdom, pay tithing? Why can't I have one foot in Babylon?" May I tell you why? Because spiritual pedaling takes both feet! Unless you are fully engaged in living the gospel—living it with all of your "heart, might, mind and strength"<sup>20</sup>—you cannot generate enough spiritual light to push back the darkness.

And in this world the darkness is never far away. In fact, it is always just around the corner, waiting for an opportunity to come in. "If thou doest not well," the Lord said, "sin lieth at the door."<sup>21</sup>

It is as predictable as any physical law: if we let the light of the Spirit flicker or fade by failing to keep the commandments or by not partaking of the sacrament or praying or studying the scriptures, the darkness of the adversary will surely come in. "That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience."<sup>22</sup>

In the scriptures we read that some individuals “grope in the dark without light” and “stagger like a drunken man.”<sup>23</sup> Stumbling along, we may become accustomed to the dimness of our surroundings and forget how glorious it is to walk in the light.

### **The path to the light**

There is a way out of the “mists of darkness”<sup>24</sup> and onto the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. The Lord told Isaiah, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them.”<sup>25</sup>

The prophet Nephi outlined the path: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>26</sup>

The covenant we make at baptism and renew as we partake of the sacrament—to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments—includes the promise that we will always have His Spirit, that we will always have that light to be with us.<sup>27</sup> The emblems of the Savior’s Atonement remind us that we need not stumble in darkness. We can have His light with us always.

### **“Let your light so shine”**

Growing up on Long Island, in New York, I understood how vital light was to those traveling in the darkness on the open sea. How dangerous is a fallen light-house! How devastating is a lighthouse whose light has failed!

We who have the gift of the Holy Ghost must be true to its promptings so we can be a light to others.

“Let your light so shine before men,” said the Lord, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>28</sup>

We never know who may be depending on us. And, as the Savior said, we “know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.”<sup>29</sup>

### **A special witness of His light**

Now, my brothers and sisters, in this, the last great conflict between light and darkness, I am grateful for the opportunity to “endure hardness, as a [disciple] of Jesus Christ.”<sup>30</sup> With Paul, I declare, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”<sup>31</sup> I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ “is the light and the life of the world; yea, [the] light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”<sup>32</sup>

He is the Light of Bethlehem, born of Mary, His mortal mother, and His Father, Almighty God.

He is the Light who was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, upon whom the Holy Ghost was manifest in the spirit like a dove descending.

He is the Light in whom His Father was well pleased.

He is the Light at the head of the ancient Church, organized with Twelve Apostles, prophets, and Seventies.

He is the Light of the Atonement, fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation.

He is the Light of the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord with a glorified body of flesh and bone, who broke the bands of

death and gained an everlasting victory over the grave.

He is the Light that ascended into heaven before the eyes of His disciples, with a promise that in like manner He would come again.

He is the Light that appeared with His Father and restored, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the same Church He established during His ministry on earth.

He is the Light that leads and guides this Church today through revelation to a prophet, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles.

He is *my* Light, *my* Redeemer, *my* Savior—and yours.

I know that God lives. I know that He hath called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light.”<sup>33</sup> I pray that the light of His restored gospel will continue to spread throughout the world so that all may have the opportunity to hear and choose, and that His Church will “come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun,” so that His “glory may fill the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:2.
2. John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 27 Jan. 1880, 1.
3. Micah 4:1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
5. <sup>TM</sup>Salt Lake Olympic Committee.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:13.
8. Moroni 7:13.
9. Moroni 7:16.

10. See Articles of Faith 1:1; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.

11. See Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704.

12. See John 14:16–18, 26–27.

13. John 12:46.

14. John 8:12.

15. See Psalm 27:1.

16. See 3 Nephi 17:24.

17. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.

18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:28.

19. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.

21. Genesis 4:7.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 93:39.

23. Job 12:25.

24. 1 Nephi 12:17.

25. Isaiah 42:16.

26. 2 Nephi 31:13.

27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77, 79.

28. Matthew 5:15–16.

29. 3 Nephi 18:32.

30. 2 Timothy 2:3.

31. Romans 13:12.

32. Mosiah 16:9.

33. 1 Peter 2:9.

34. Doctrine and Covenants 109:73–74.

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The choir sang “Where Can I Turn for Peace?”

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## President Hinckley

We express appreciation to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### A call for greater faith

From where we speak, it is a beautiful April Sabbath morning. The tulips are well out of the ground and will soon be bursting into flowering beauty. In the

winter of our doubt there came the hope of spring. We knew it would come. Such was our faith, based on the experiences of earlier years.

And so it is with matters of the spirit and soul. As each man or woman walks

the way of life, there come dark seasons of doubt, of discouragement, of disillusionment. In such circumstances, a few see ahead by the light of faith, but many stumble along in the darkness and even become lost.

My call to you this morning is a call to faith, that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), as Paul described it.

### **Faith lights the way in our eternal journey**

In the process of conversion, the investigator of the Church hears a little. He may read a little. He does not, he cannot comprehend the wonder of it all. But if he is earnest in his search, if he is willing to get on his knees and pray about it, the Spirit touches his heart, perhaps ever so lightly. It points him in the right direction. He sees a little of what he has never seen before. And with faith, whether it be recognized or not, he takes a few guarded steps. Then another, brighter vista opens before him.

Long ago I worked for one of our railroads whose tracks threaded the passes through these western mountains. I frequently rode the trains. It was in the days when there were steam locomotives. Those great monsters of the rails were huge and fast and dangerous. I often wondered how the engineer dared the long journey through the night. Then I came to realize that it was not one long journey, but rather a constant continuation of a short journey. The engine had a powerful headlight that made bright the way for a distance of 400 or 500 yards. The engineer saw only that distance, and that was enough, because it was constantly before him all through the night into the dawn of the new day.

The Lord has spoken of this process. He said:

"That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light grow-

eth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:23-24).

And so it is with our eternal journey. We take one step at a time. In doing so we reach toward the unknown, but faith lights the way. If we will cultivate that faith, we shall never walk in darkness.

### **A man's faith grows step by step**

Let me tell you of a man I know. I will not mention his name lest he feel embarrassed. His wife felt there was something missing in their lives. She spoke with a relative one day who was a member of the Church. The relative suggested that she call the missionaries. She did so. But the husband was rude to them and told them not to come again.

Months passed. One day another missionary, finding the record of this visit, decided that he and his companion would try again. He was a tall elder from California who carried a big smile on his face.

They knocked on the door; the man answered. Could they come in for a few minutes? they asked. He consented.

The missionary said, in effect, "I wonder if you know how to pray." The man answered that he knew the Lord's Prayer. The missionary said, "That is good, but let me tell you how to give a personal prayer." He went on to explain that we get on our knees in an attitude of humility before the God of heaven. The man did so. The missionary then went on to say, "We address God as our Father in Heaven. We then thank Him for His blessings, such as our health, our friends, our food. We then ask for His blessings. We express our innermost hopes and desires. We ask Him to bless those in need. We do it all in the name of His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, concluding with 'amen.'"

It was a pleasant experience for the man. He had gleaned a little light and understanding, a touch of faith. He was ready to try another step.

Line upon line, the missionaries patiently taught him. He responded as his



faith grew into a dim light of understanding. Friends from his branch gathered around to reassure him and answer his questions. The men played tennis with him, and he and his family were invited to their homes for dinner.

He was baptized, and that was a giant step of faith. The branch president asked him to be a Scoutmaster to four boys. That led to other responsibilities, and the light of faith strengthened in his life with each new opportunity and experience.

That has continued. Today he stands as a capable and loved stake president, a leader of great wisdom and understanding, and, above all, a man of great faith.

The challenge which faces every member of this Church is to take the next step, to accept that responsibility to which he is called, even though he does not feel equal to it, and to do so in faith with the full expectation that the Lord will light the way before him.

### **A woman pays her tithing faithfully**

Let me give you a story of a woman in São Paulo, Brazil. She worked while going to school to provide for her family. I use her own words in telling this story. She says:

"The university in which I studied had a regulation that prohibited the students that were in debt from taking tests. For this reason, when I received my salary I would first separate the money for tithing and offerings, and the remainder was allotted for the payment of the school and other expenses.

"I remember a time when I . . . faced serious financial difficulties. It was a Thursday when I received my salary. When I figured the monthly budget, I noticed that there wouldn't be enough to pay [both] my tithing and my university. I would have to choose between them. The bimonthly tests would start the following week, and if I didn't take them I could lose the school year. I felt great agony. . . . My heart ached.

I had a painful decision before me, and I didn't know what to decide. I pondered between the two choices: to pay tithing or to risk the possibility of not obtaining the necessary credits to be approved in school.

"This feeling consumed my soul and remained with me up to Saturday. It was then that I remembered that when I was baptized I had agreed to live the law of tithing. I had taken upon myself an obligation, not with the missionaries, but with my Heavenly Father. At that moment the anguish started to disappear, giving place to a pleasant sensation of tranquility and determination. . . .

"That night when I prayed, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my indecision. On Sunday, before the beginning of sacrament meeting, I contacted the bishop, and with great pleasure I paid my tithing and offerings. That was a special day. I felt happy and peaceful within myself and with Heavenly Father.

"The next day I was in my office; I tried to find a way to be able to take the tests that would begin on Wednesday. The more I thought, the further I felt from a solution. At that time I worked in an attorney's office, and my employer was the most strict and austere person I had ever met.

"The working period was ending when my employer approached and gave the last orders of the day. When he had done so, with his briefcase in his hand he bid farewell. . . . Suddenly he halted, and looking at me he asked, 'How is your college?' I was surprised, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The only thing I could answer with a trembling voice was, 'Everything is all right!' He looked thoughtfully at me and bid farewell again. . . .

"Suddenly the secretary entered the room, saying that I was a very fortunate person! When I asked her why, she simply answered: 'The employer has just said that from today on the company is going to pay fully for your college and your books. Before you leave, stop at my desk

and inform me of the costs so that tomorrow I can give you the check.'

"After she left, crying and feeling very humble, I knelt exactly where I was and thanked the Lord for His generosity. I . . . said to Heavenly Father that He didn't have to bless me so much. I only needed the cost of one month's installment, and the tithing I had paid on Sunday was very small compared to the amount I was receiving! During that prayer the words in Malachi came to my mind: 'Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Malachi 3:10). Up to that moment I had never felt the magnitude of the promise contained in that scripture and that this commandment was truly a witness of the love that God, our Heavenly Father, gives to His children here on earth."

### **Great promises to those who walk by faith**

Faith is the very fiber that gives strength to this work. Wherever this Church is established across this broad world, it is evident. It is not limited to one country or one nation or one language or one people. It is found everywhere. We are a people of faith. We walk by faith. We move forward on our eternal journey, one step at a time.

Great is the promise of the Lord to the faithful everywhere. He has said:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

"And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come. . . .

"Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know. . . .

"And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

"For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man" (D&C 76:5–10).

How could anyone ask for more? How glorious is this work in which we are engaged. How wondrous are the ways of the Almighty when we walk in faith before Him.

### **By faith we lift each other**

The faith of an investigator is like a piece of green wood, thrown on a blazing fire. Warmed by the flames, it dries and begins to burn. But if it is pulled away, it cannot sustain itself. Its flickering flame dies. But if left with the fire, it gradually begins to burn with brightness. Soon it is part of the flaming fire and will light other, greener wood.

And so goes, my brothers and sisters, this great work of faith, lifting people across this broad earth to increased understanding of the ways of the Lord and greater happiness in following His pattern.

May God, our Eternal Father, continue to smile upon this, His Kingdom, and cause it to prosper as we, His children, walk in faith is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 172nd Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 2002. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 172nd Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

### How firm our foundation

About two decades ago when a temple was to be built in Mexico City, architects faced a great challenge. Because Mexico City is situated on a basin over water, some of its buildings settle and become tilted with the passage of time. Construction of a temple there required a special foundation. Two hundred twenty-one large, reinforced concrete piles<sup>1</sup> were driven more than 100 feet deep into the ground. Onto those pilings, steel straps were anchored

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Redeemer of Israel." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Monte J. Brough of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."  
Elder Monte J. Brough offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We shall then hear from Elders John M. Madsen, Carlos H. Amado, and Gene R. Cook of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

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## Elder Russell M. Nelson

and fastened to a unit that can be adjusted if need be to keep the building level.<sup>2</sup> With this unseen but sure foundation, that temple today stands steady and straight.

A firm foundation is necessary for any building, institution, or individual to endure. With that in mind, let us consider the foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Then let us see how the solid foundation of the Church supports our foundation of faith as individual members of the Church.

## I. Foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This Church stands on a unique foundation, anchored to a bedrock of timeless truth. Brothers and sisters, the holy cause in which we are engaged did not begin in 1820 in the state of New York. It did not begin in Bethlehem. It did not begin in the Garden of Eden. The underpinnings of the everlasting gospel were in place even before the world was.

This reality is affirmed repeatedly in holy writ. I have studied the scriptures pertaining to that part of eternity before the earth was formed. Don't worry. I won't quote them all. But I will append some of those citations to the published text of this message. These unseen and timeless truths constitute "premortal pillars" that undergird the foundation of this Church.

### *The plan of redemption and possibility of an inheritance in the kingdom of God*

Before the foundation of the earth, the plan of salvation was prepared.<sup>3</sup> It included the glorious possibility of a divine inheritance in the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Atonement of Jesus Christ*

Central to that plan was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In premortal councils, He was foreordained by His Father to atone for our sins and break the bands of physical and spiritual death.<sup>5</sup> Jesus declared: "I . . . was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name."<sup>6</sup> Later, Paul added that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."<sup>7</sup>

### *Opposition from the adversary*

Even before the world was formed, the Lord was opposed by Satan.<sup>8</sup> He and

his minions have always fought against the Savior's sacred work and will continue to do so.

### *Foreordination for and conferral of the priesthood*

Before the foundation of the world, each of us existed as spirit children with our Father in Heaven. Among us were noble and great men foreordained to bear the priesthood.<sup>9</sup> Abraham,<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah,<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith,<sup>12</sup> and others<sup>13</sup> were destined to become prophets of God. Also foreseen was that the blood of prophets would be shed in this holy cause.<sup>14</sup> The manner of conferring the priesthood was to come down from the fathers "from the beginning of time, . . . even . . . before the foundation of the earth."<sup>15</sup>

### *Sisters empowered to glorify God*

Sisters received special gifts. They, according to the Lord, were empowered "to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, . . . for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; . . . herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified."<sup>16</sup> Think of it: When a mother bears and cares for a child, she not only helps the earth answer the end of its creation,<sup>17</sup> but she glorifies God!

### *Children of the covenant*

Children of the covenant were designated in the premortal realm. Paul taught that the Lord "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."<sup>18</sup>

### *Blessings predicated upon obedience to law*

Then conditions were established that allowed us to receive blessings from God—upon obedience to laws upon which those blessings were predicated.<sup>19</sup>

*Sacred things to be revealed in the latter days*

Another pillar pertains to revelation reserved for the latter days. The Lord had long planned to reveal "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."<sup>20</sup> Those things included revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon.<sup>21</sup> They also included ordinances and covenants of the holy temple.<sup>22</sup> To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared that "I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times."<sup>23</sup>

*Redemption of the dead*

The Lord revealed that "the ordinance of baptizing for the dead . . . was instituted from before the foundation of the world."<sup>24</sup> Salvation was thus made available for those "who should die without a knowledge of the gospel."<sup>25</sup> A welding link between generations was provided, that a whole, complete, and perfect union of dispensations, keys, powers, and glories should take place.<sup>26</sup>

Brothers and sisters, these unseen but sure pillars were in place before the world was. They undergird the everlasting gospel—now restored in its fulness.<sup>27</sup> With such a foundation, this Church will not be moved from its place,<sup>28</sup> even through the Millennium.<sup>29</sup>

**II. Foundation of individual members of the Church***Christ is the only sure foundation*

Just as buildings and institutions have foundations, so do we as individuals have foundations that support our faith. Some are weak; some are strong. We can waffle "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,"<sup>30</sup> or we can stand on a firm foundation and anchor ourselves with straps of spiritual steel, rooted and

grounded to the timeless pillars of the gospel.<sup>31</sup>

President Gordon B. Hinckley has asked that new converts be sustained in the Church by a friend and a call to serve and be nourished by the good word of God.<sup>32</sup> Often we sing, "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord, / Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!"<sup>33</sup> When we receive that nurturing word of God, we feast upon His love.<sup>34</sup>

Remember: "It is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power . . . to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation."<sup>35</sup>

*Firm foundations help us bear life's burdens*

Even firm foundations cannot prevent life's problems. Wayward children cause parents to grieve. Some broken families don't get fixed. Gender disorientation is poorly understood. Married couples, for whatever reason, may not be blessed with children. Even in our day, "the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money."<sup>36</sup> Some things just don't seem fair.<sup>37</sup>

With strong underpinnings, however, we are better able to reach upward for help, even when faced with questions without easy answers. The poet so wrote:

Who Thou art I know not,  
But this much I know:  
Thou hast set the Pleiades  
In a silver row;

Thou hast sent the trackless winds  
Loose upon their way;  
Thou hast reared a colored wall  
"Twixt the night and day;

Thou hast made the flowers to bloom  
And the stars to shine;

Hid rare gems of richest ore  
In the tunneled mine;  
But chief of all Thy wondrous works,  
Supreme of all Thy plan,  
Thou hast put an upward reach  
In the heart of Man.<sup>38</sup>

Though we don't know all things,<sup>39</sup> we know that God lives and that He loves us.<sup>40</sup> Standing on that firm foundation, we can reach up and find strength to endure the heavy burdens of life.

### *Two faithful parents*

For example, I honor those special souls who face challenges of parenthood with unwavering faith in their Maker. To a family dear to Sister Nelson and me, a son was recently born. This child was afflicted with multiple anomalies affecting virtually every system of his little body. Two operations were required in his first week of life. More will be necessary. When I spoke with the child's parents, they did not ask, "Why did this happen to us?" Instead, they declared, "We know that this child is meant for us. God has entrusted this special baby to us. We will love him and care for him to the best of our ability." Thank the Lord for such parents!

### *A faithful wife*

Not long ago, death came to the husband of a friend of ours, suddenly and without warning. Of her, these words were penned by her own sister:

"Searching the years and days just past, she is awestruck, recognizing specific skills and experiences put into her life by a loving Father, things that might have seemed circumstantial at the time but that have specifically prepared her to cope successfully with this heartbreaking loss. Rather than feeling abandoned and bitter, she feels cradled and cared for. . . . She said to me, 'When I see how carefully Heavenly Father has prepared and planned for my present circumstance,

how can I be frightened about my future? Surely He is putting into place today all that I will need to face the unknown times ahead.'"<sup>41</sup>

### *A faithful missionary*

From a missionary I received an unforgettable letter. He wrote:

"I still am not certain why it was that I was [afflicted] with [cancer], particularly during the time I was serving the Lord on a mission, but I can say with all honesty and sincerity that I am eternally grateful to our gracious Heavenly Father for allowing me to have that experience. . . .

"Not a day goes by," he continued, "that I don't think about the days I spent lying in the hospital suffering through chemotherapy or grimacing with the pain from another operation. . . . Not a day . . . passes when I don't think of the days I spent studying the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and remembering the overwhelming feelings of comfort and peace which I felt. I often think of the nights when I would retire to bed and pour out my soul to my Heavenly Father and thank Him for preserving my life."

Then the elder shared this wonderful news: "I returned to the doctor this week . . . and . . . he found no evidence of any disease in my body."<sup>42</sup>

I love such faithful missionaries!

How firm our foundation? The foundation of this Church was forged long before the world was. It is strong. It is true. It is eternal. The foundation of one's individual faith, if anchored firmly to eternal truth, allows each of us to reach upward with an eternal perspective.<sup>43</sup> That faith will give hope when there is no hope. It will give us joy here and eternal life hereafter. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Each pile was 18 inches in diameter.
2. See John Forbes O'Donnal, *Pioneer in Guatemala* (1997), 288.

3. See 1 Nephi 10:18; Mosiah 15:19; Alma 12:25, 30; 18:39; 22:13–14; 42:26; Doctrine and Covenants 76:12–13.
4. To people of the Old World, the Lord said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). People of ancient America were also taught that “they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world” (2 Nephi 9:18; see also Ether 4:19).
5. See John 17:5, 24; 1 Peter 1:19–20; Mosiah 4:6–7; 18:13; 3 Nephi 26:3–5; Doctrine and Covenants 93:7–9; Moses 5:57; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 5:43; 14:30–31.
6. Ether 3:14.
7. Ephesians 2:20.
8. See Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:6–8.
9. See Alma 13:3, 5, 7; Doctrine and Covenants 132:28; 138:55–56; Abraham 3:22–23.
10. See Abraham 3:23.
11. See Jeremiah 1:4–5.
12. See 2 Nephi 3:5–15; Doctrine and Covenants 127:2; 138:53–55.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:53.
14. See Luke 11:49–51.
15. Abraham 1:3.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:63.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:16–17.
18. Ephesians 1:4; see also verse 5. Paul also taught that the power of God, “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, . . . was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9; see also D&C 38:1–4; Abraham 3:22–26). It is important to note that the Book of Mormon serves “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord” (Book of Mormon, title page).
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21; 132:5, 11–12.
20. Matthew 13:35.
21. See 2 Nephi 27:10.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 124:41.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 124:33.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 128:5.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
27. See Acts 3:20–21.
28. See Daniel 2:28, 31–44; Doctrine and Covenants 65:2–6; 124:45.
29. See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* (1982), 672.
30. James 1:6.
31. See Ephesians 3:17–19; Colossians 2:6–7.
32. See Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51; see also Jacob 6:7; Moroni 6:4.
33. *Hymns*, no. 85; see also 2 Nephi 28:27–30.
34. See Jacob 3:2.
35. Helaman 5:12. Remember also that a wise man builds his house upon a rock and not upon shifting sand (see Matthew 7:24–27).
36. Helaman 7:5.
37. Whether things seem “fair” relates to the limits of one’s perspective. Paul taught, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).
38. Harry Kemp, “God the Architect,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 46–47.
39. Compared with the omniscience of our Creator, we know relatively little about dinosaurs or the details of the Creation, for example. But this we do know: “Verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven” (D&C 101:32–34; see also D&C 121:29–32).
40. See 1 Nephi 11:16–17.
41. Virginia H. Pearce, in *Why I Believe* (2002), 245–46.

42. Personal correspondence, 15 Jan. 2002.
43. Our mortal probation has been likened to the second act of a three-act play. When the curtain comes down on act two, the play is not over. Without the vision gained from acts one and three, the

second act could seem either too short, too long, too hard, or too confusing. When we know about all three acts, the second act acquires greater significance; thus the need for an eternal perspective.

## Elder John M. Madsen

### **"He that hath eternal life is rich"**

Almost 2,000 years ago a rich young man asked an extremely important question of the Savior: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16).

Having heard the Savior's instructions and His gentle invitation to "come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21), the rich young man "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22).

Tragically, millions in the world today still prize and choose "the riches of the earth" over the "riches of eternity" (D&C 38:39), not knowing or fully understanding that "*he that hath eternal life is rich*" (D&C 6:7; italics added) and that *eternal life is God's greatest gift to man* (see D&C 14:7). Simply stated, eternal life is to live forever as families in the presence of God (see D&C 132:19–20, 24, 55).

### **Know God and Christ to obtain eternal life**

In His great Intercessory Prayer, the Savior gives to all mankind the key to obtaining eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

But how can man come to know the only true God? The Savior answers:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly

Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

### **The identity and role of Jesus Christ**

But who *is* Jesus Christ that we should come unto Him and *know* Him? I know of no more wonderful summary of the identity and role of the Lord Jesus Christ than the declaration of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve entitled "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," from which I quote:

"[Jesus Christ] was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. . . .

" . . . He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. . . .

" . . . He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

"He rose from the grave to 'become the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He . . . ministered among His 'other sheep' (John 10:16) in ancient America. . . . He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised 'dispensation of the fulness of times' (Ephesians 1:10). . . .

" . . . His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—'built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone' (Ephesians 2:20).



“... He will someday return to earth ... [and] rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords. ... Each of us will stand to be judged of Him. ...

“... His duly ordained Apostles [bear testimony] that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel. ... He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world” (*Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

It is wonderful, and absolutely essential, to know who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

But again, I testify that the only way we and all mankind can come unto our Heavenly Father and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, is to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and know Him.

### **To know Jesus, we must receive Him**

What does it mean to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and how can we come to know Him? The Savior answers:

“Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me.

“But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me” (D&C 132:22–23).

Can we truly and fully comprehend His words? “If ye receive me”—the Great Jehovah, the Messiah, the Creator of the earth, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the immortal Son of God—“*If ye receive me ... , then shall ye know me*” (D&C 132:23; italics added).

To know the Lord Jesus Christ, we and all mankind must receive Him. And to receive Him, we must receive His servants (see Matthew 10:40; D&C 1:38; 68:8–9; 84:36; 112:20).

To receive Him, we must receive the fulness of His gospel, His everlasting covenant, including all those truths or laws,

covenants, and ordinances needed for us to enter back into the presence of God (see D&C 39:11; 45:9; 66:2; 76:40–43; 132:12; 133:57).

To receive Him, faithful sons of God must receive His priesthood and magnify their callings (see D&C 84:33–35).

But ultimately, to receive Him and know Him, we and all mankind must, as Moroni exhorts, “*come unto Christ, and be perfected in him*” (Moroni 10:32; italics added). In other words, we must come unto Christ and strive to “become” like Him (see Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–44; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34).

Said the risen Lord: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). The meaning of the word *ought*, as used in His question “What manner of men ought ye to be?” is crucial to understanding His answer, “Even as I am.” The word *ought* means “to be necessary” or “to be held or bound in duty or moral obligation” (*Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*, 7th ed. [1993], “ought”; see also Luke 24:26), suggesting—and the holy scriptures, ancient and modern, confirm—that it is “necessary,” and that we are “bound,” as by covenant, “to be,” as He declared, “even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; see also 3 Nephi 12:48; Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2; Moroni 7:48).

It is my prayer that the time may soon come “when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20; see also Moses 7:62; Isaiah 11:9), that all who will may receive Him, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and know Him, that they may come unto our Heavenly Father, and know Him, and thus obtain eternal life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Carlos H. Amado

### Teachings from the history of Joseph Smith

The history of Joseph Smith was written to share the story of the Restoration of the Church in these latter days. The essence of the story is a demonstration of trust in the promises of the Lord, and a source of joy and certainty for all those who believe.

I have been able to read it many times and in different circumstances. It impressed me as a child; it was a guide and source of strength when I was a teenager; I shared it with courage and enthusiasm as a young missionary; and even now it continues to fill me with astonishment and a deep sense of gratitude. Since Joseph Smith first recorded it, it remains as a blessing and a gift of faith, a legacy, for the sincere believer; it is an open invitation for those who look for the truth and a permanent challenge to the unbeliever.

For those who are not yet members of the Church, I suggest you read the testimony of Joseph Smith with an open mind and real intent. You will feel his sincerity, and you will discover the establishment of the Church, restored in a miraculous way!

Although there is ample spiritual content to this fascinating story, I will limit my remarks to sharing five principles which, just as they did for the Prophet, will help you to come to know God.

### A sincere desire to know the truth

*Principle 1: Have a sincere desire to know the truth.* Joseph Smith had an intense desire to know God and to do His will. You can develop that same desire, and God Himself can lead you to the truth. When you recognize that truth, do all that you can to live your life in accordance with it.

### The importance of reading the scriptures

*Principle 2: Learn the importance of reading the scriptures.* Joseph Smith knew them because he studied them. He said:

"I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:11).

During his short ministry, Joseph Smith also received many other important revelations which were the result of reading the scriptures. You need to study them in order to come to know God, who is the source of all truth.

### The value of prayer

*Principle 3: Learn the value of prayer.* The young Joseph said:

"At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. . . .

"... It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

"... I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

"... I had found the testimony of James to be true—that a man who lacked wisdom might ask of God, and obtain, and not be upbraided" (Joseph Smith—History 1:13–15, 26).

Our Heavenly Father, as a perfect father, knows all your spiritual and material needs and wants to bless you, which is why He has given you the commandment to seek Him and ask Him.

Joseph came to know the truth because he prayed. In our time, millions of members of this Church also testify of the

reality of the Restoration because, following that counsel, they asked the Lord with faith. You have the same right to receive an answer to your prayers because *a testimony is a gift that God gives only to those who ask with real intent*. Try it, and the promise will be fulfilled.

### The blessing of meditation

*Principle 4: Discover the blessing of meditation.* Joseph Smith meditated often; he thought, analyzed, and compared; he tried to find answers to what he read in the scriptures. He said:

“During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness. . . .

“ . . . I often said to myself: . . . Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again” (Joseph Smith—History 1:8, 10, 12).

To meditate about eternal truths is to think and to ask ourselves, over and over: “How can I know?” “How have others come to know?”

How can you come to a knowledge of these things? Please meditate about it seriously.

### The joy of going to church

*Principle 5: Experience the joy of going to church.* In his desire to know the truth, Joseph Smith went to various denominations in his community. About his experience with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith described clearly the instructions he received about other churches:

“I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. . . .

“ . . . It was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18, 26).

All of us need to come to know the kingdom of God on earth and to receive a testimony of its truth. We go to church to feel the Spirit, learn His doctrine, renew our covenants, and receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to return to the presence of God with our families. You are cordially invited to come to church and see for yourself all these things.

### Seek with real intent to be converted

Conversion is a personal and spiritual process. Every individual must examine these principles for himself. It is not enough to make a halfhearted attempt, accompanied by doubts, fear, or lack of trust. God promises us, because of His mercy, that He will answer our petitions in accordance with our sincerity. Only those who seek with real intent will receive their answer, as a gift from God, through the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is also called the Comforter and the Witness. To Him we owe our knowledge and our testimony that Christ is the Son of God.

After you are baptized, if you remain worthy and faithful to your covenants, you will have the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost, through whisperings, impressions, feelings, dreams, and warnings.

### Why some people do not remain true

History and the scriptures tell us of people who heard, talked with, or in some other way had concrete evidence of the existence of God and His plan for our sal-

vation. Nevertheless, many of them did not remain true to their convictions.

We learn from this that it is not what we learn through our physical senses but that which comes under the influence of the Holy Ghost which allows us to understand God's purposes and to follow Him.

When someone has learned these basic principles and ceases to practice them, he loses the light and guide which helps him to understand God and His prophets. The outward sign we see is that they separate themselves, become less active, or even contend against the Church. The inward sign is that they have ceased to practice one or more of these five things:

1. They no longer have a sincere desire to know all the truth.
2. They no longer read the scriptures.
3. They no longer pray.
4. They no longer meditate about eternal truths.
5. They no longer go to church.

## Draw closer to God each day

It is wonderful that in a time of great religious confusion, while not yet 15 years old, in the midst of opposition and even persecution, Joseph Smith patiently and diligently demonstrated obedience and showed us the simple but effective way to draw closer to God.

This process requires that we learn, precept upon precept, a little here and a little there, until we develop faith and clear understanding of our divine potential (see 2 Nephi 28:30).

It is our responsibility to strengthen, day by day, the impressions that we feel through the Spirit, by applying these five principles.

It is my prayer that we may do this, constantly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gene R. Cook

### Charity—perfect and everlasting love

My dear brothers and sisters, I desire more than anything this hour to bear witness, a personal witness, of the love of God for me, for you, and for all mankind. What man is sufficiently adequate to be able to express the depth of his gratitude in recognition of the love of God? How blessed I have been for so many years to be with you and to have found the pure love of Christ emanating from you. I am deeply indebted to you and to God.

### Defining charity

The Lord said that charity is "the pure love of Christ,"<sup>1</sup> that which is "most joyous to the soul,"<sup>2</sup> "the greatest of all the gifts of God,"<sup>3</sup> "perfect" and "everlasting."<sup>4</sup>

As difficult as charity is to describe, it is rather easily recognized in the lives of those who possess it.

- An aged, crippled grandmother who subscribes to an afternoon newspaper, knowing it will bring her delivery-boy grandson to her home every day where, at her knee, she teaches him to pray.

- A mother who, in hard economic times and scarcity of meat, seems to savor only chicken wings, to the puzzlement of all.

- A man who suffers an undeserved public chastisement but humbly receives it anyway.

Is not the common thread in these examples charity, a selflessness, a not seeking for anything in return? All of our divine attributes seem to flow from and be encompassed by this one.<sup>5</sup> All men may have the gift of love, but charity is bestowed only upon those who are *true* followers of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The very power of God is found in His attributes of godliness.<sup>7</sup> The power of

the priesthood is maintained by these attributes.<sup>8</sup> We seek these attributes, especially charity, the pure love of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

### Destroyers of love and peace

Yet there stands the devil, the destroyer of this love, replacing it with anger and hostility.<sup>10</sup> My friend William felt that way—hostile. It seemed that whatever happened, it was the Lord's fault—an illness, a death, a wayward child, a personal weakness, an "unanswered" prayer—all of which hardened his heart. His inner anger, which could flare up in but a moment, was directed toward God, his fellowman, and himself. From his heart emanated unbelief, stubbornness, pride, contention, and a loss of hope, love, and direction. He was miserable!

These destroyers of peace<sup>11</sup> blinded William to God's feelings for him. He could neither discover nor *feel* God's love. He did not see, especially in those dark moments, that God was richly blessing him even still. Instead he returned anger for love. Have we not all felt that at times? Even when we have merited love the least, He has loved us the most. Truly, He loves us first.<sup>12</sup>

### Suffering with purpose: charity is empowering

Now, my Christlike friend Betty was just the opposite. She encountered many of the same difficulties as did William, but because she *felt* God's love, she suffered tribulation in the Savior's name,<sup>13</sup> partook of His divine nature,<sup>14</sup> and thus gained a deeper faith in and a love for God, along with the strength to handle whatever might come.

Her love for others increased. She seemed to even forgive others *in advance*. She learned how to cause them to *feel* her love. She learned that love shared is love multiplied.

Finally, she learned to love herself more, being more kind, gentle, and long-

suffering. She stopped her struggle for self-esteem and started loving herself the way God loved her. Her image of herself became His image of her.

### Recognizing, receiving, and conveying God's love

How, then, can we better "clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, . . . of perfectness and peace"?<sup>15</sup> May I share with you three suggestions.

1. *Recognize His love.* "Pray . . . with all the energy of heart"<sup>16</sup> for this gift. Do so in meekness with a broken heart, and you will be filled with hope and love from the Holy Ghost Himself. He will reveal Christ to you.<sup>17</sup>

It is part of the gift of charity to be able to recognize the Lord's hand and feel His love in all that surrounds us. At times it will not be easy to discover the Lord's love for us in all that we experience, because He is a perfect, *anonymous* giver. You will search all your life to uncover His hand and the gifts He has bestowed upon you because of His intimate, modest, humble way of granting such wonderful gifts.

Ponder with me a moment the following majestic gifts: the glories of all creation,<sup>18</sup> the earth, the heavens; your feelings of love and joy; His responses of mercy, forgiveness, and innumerable answers to prayer; the gift of loved ones; and finally the greatest gift of all—the Father's gift of His atoning Son, the perfect one in charity, even the God of love.<sup>19</sup>

2. *Receive His love in humility.* Be grateful for the gift and especially for the giver of the gift.<sup>20</sup> True gratitude is the ability to humbly see, feel, and even receive love.<sup>21</sup> Gratitude is a form of returning love to God. Recognize His hand; tell Him so; express your love to Him.<sup>22</sup> As you come to truly know the Lord, you will find an intimate, sacred relationship built on trust. You will come to know He understands your anguish<sup>23</sup> and will, in compassion, always respond to you in love.

Receive it. *Feel* it. It is not enough just to know that God loves you. The gift is to be *felt* continually day by day.<sup>24</sup> It will then be a divine motivator throughout your life. Repent. Remove any worldliness from your life,<sup>25</sup> including anger. Receive a continual remission of your sins,<sup>26</sup> and you will bridle all your passions and be filled with love.<sup>27</sup>

3. *Convey His love.* The Lord's response to us is always filled with love. Should not our response to Him be in kind, with *real* feelings of love? He gives grace (or goodness) for grace, attribute for attribute. As our obedience increases, we receive more grace (or goodness) for the grace we return to Him.<sup>28</sup> Offer Him the refinement of your attributes so that when He does appear, you will be *like* Him.<sup>29</sup>

As a man first immerses his thoughts in love and conveys those feelings to God, man, or self, a magnified portion of that attribute will surely follow from the Spirit. That is true of all godly attributes. Righteous feelings generated by a man seem to precede the increase of those feelings from the Spirit. Unless you are feeling love, you cannot convey true love to others. The Lord has told us to love one another as He loves us,<sup>30</sup> so remember: to be loved, *truly* love.<sup>31</sup>

### The fruits of the gift of charity

Brothers and sisters, as an especial witness of Christ, I bear testimony to you again of the overwhelming love of God for each of us personally. Magnifying that gift from God will bring a new heart, a pure heart, and ever-increasing love and peace. As we increasingly think and act like Him, the attributes of the natural man will slip away to be replaced by the heart and the mind of Christ.<sup>32</sup> We will become like Him and then truly receive Him.<sup>33</sup>

The prophet of the Lord here before you loves you, as do all these, my Brethren. May the Lord bless us to always have "the affections of [our] heart . . . placed

upon [Him] forever."<sup>34</sup> "That [our] burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son"<sup>35</sup> is my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Moroni 7:47.
2. See 1 Nephi 11:22–23; 8:10–12.
3. 1 Nephi 15:36.
4. Moroni 8:17.
5. "There is one virtue, attribute, or principle, which, if cherished and practiced by the Saints, would prove salvation to thousands upon thousands. I allude to charity, or love, from which proceed forgiveness, long suffering, kindness, and patience" (Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, 11 Jan. 1860, 353).
6. See Moroni 7:48. Is there a difference between charity and love? The Lord referred to them separately a number of times, such as in Doctrine and Covenants 4:5. Some have said charity is love plus sacrifice—a seasoned love. Perhaps charity is to love as faith is to belief. Both faith and charity take action, work, and sacrifice. Charity encompasses His love for us, our love for Him, and Christlike love for others.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–24.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46.
9. "A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:227).
10. When real suffering occurs in life, the devil is always there to sour men's hearts in anger, while the Lord continually emanates love. In the same suffering "many had become hardened . . . and many were softened because of their afflictions" (Alma 62:41). What a wonderful example of how to respond to affliction.
11. Some destroyers of men's love and peace include but are not limited to fear, perfectionism, envy, unsubmitiveness, doubt, anger, jealousy, unrighteous control, unbelief, impatience, judging, fostering hurt feelings, pride, contention, murmuring,

seeking for honor, competition, and lying. All of these are of the natural man, and not of the man of Christ.

12. See 1 John 4:19.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:13. My friend knew the suffering would help her prove herself (see Abraham 3:24–25; D&C 98:13–14); learn to choose between good and evil (see 2 Nephi 2:18); learn that blessings come after the trials (see D&C 58:2–4); learn obedience, patience, and faith (see D&C 105:6; Mosiah 23:21; Romans 5:3–5); obtain a forgiveness of sin (see Helaman 15:3; D&C 132:50, 60; 95:1).
14. See 2 Peter 1:1–8.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:125.
16. Moroni 7:48.
17. See Moroni 8:25–26; Romans 5:5; 2 Nephi 26:13.
18. See Moses 6:63; Alma 30:44.
19. See 1 John 4:8.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.
21. See Alma 5:26.
22. See Alma 26:16; Moroni 10:3.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:52–53.
24. See Alma 34:38.
25. See 1 John 2:15–17.
26. See Mosiah 4:11–12.
27. See Alma 38:12.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–13, 20.
29. See 1 John 3:1–3.
30. See John 13:34; Doctrine and Covenants 112:11.
31. “Beware of pride, and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each oth-

er’s good” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 155).

32. See 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 10:5.
33. “That man is most truly great who is most Christlike. What you sincerely in your heart think of Christ will determine what you are, will largely determine what your acts will be. . . . By choosing him as our ideal, we create within ourselves a desire to be like him, to have fellowship with him” (David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 93, 98). If you think about Him long enough, you will begin to act like Him. If you act like Him long enough, you’ll truly become like Him.
34. Alma 37:36.
35. Alma 33:23.

### President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing “How Firm a Foundation.” Following the singing, we will hear testimonies from Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, the new general president of the Relief Society, and Elders Gerald N. Lund and William R. Walker, newly called members of the Seventy. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Sister Bonnie D. Parkin

### Expressions of gratitude

Brothers and sisters, there is a saying: “Welcome the opportunity that takes you beyond your ordinary self if you would grow.” And I’m sure I’m going to grow. May I express our thanks to Sister Smoot, Sister Jensen, and Sister Dew for the great service they’ve given to all of us as members of the Church. I express my gratitude

to my counselors, Kathleen Hughes and Anne Pingree, for their willingness to serve. They are women of faith.

I am so grateful this day for my mother and father, for the teachings they gave me, for their love, for teaching me to work. I do know how to work. I am grateful for my husband. Jim is a wonderful companion. I love him, and I’m grateful for his support. He’s a man of integrity.

I'm grateful for sons and for their wives, who have helped them become better men. I'm grateful for grandchildren. The other evening we drove down to the home of one of our sons to tell him about this calling. They had their children tucked in bed. I said to Brett and Angie, "I've been called to be the general Relief Society president." And Brett said, "You? The president of the Relief Society for the whole Church?" Aren't your children wonderful? He said what I have been feeling for the past few weeks.

Yesterday when we arrived home, I had a fax from our son David and his wife, Jennifer, in Belgium. David said, "Mother, I know you can do it. You may not remember, but you used to have a scripture on the fridge that said, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15)." He said, "I was in and out of the fridge a lot, and I knew that you and Dad meant that." I'm so grateful for our children.

I'm grateful to the women of the Church who have mentored me, who have loved me, who have taught me, who have believed in me. I'm grateful for the missionaries in the England London South Mission, for their goodness, for the way they keep their covenants. I'm grateful for the British Saints who loved me and helped me be part of that great land.

Now, brothers and sisters, I do not know why I was called, but I do know that I was called. I pledge to you my love, my support, and I ask that you be patient as I learn.

I invite the young adult women of the Church, wherever you are, to look at Relief Society and know that you are needed there, that we love you, that together we can have a grand time. Please come and be with us.

### Feel the love of the Lord

As Wallace Stegner wrote of the Mormons, "Their women were incredible."<sup>1</sup> And they are today! I know that the Lord loves the women of the Church. If I could have one thing happen for every woman in this Church, it would be that they would feel the love of the Lord in their lives daily. I have felt the love of the Lord in my life, and I am so thankful for that. I'm thankful for the peace that I have felt.

I testify of my Savior Jesus Christ. I know He lives. I have felt His love; I have felt His forgiveness. I think of a sister missionary as she departed the mission. In her final testimony she said, "I came on a mission to let Heavenly Father know I loved Him, to express appreciation to Him, and to pay Him back," and she said, "I'm leaving more in His debt than I ever was before I came."

I give testimony of the power of a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and I'm thankful for him and for his love and for all prophets who have had confidence in me. I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTE

1. *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (1964), 13.

## Elder Gerald N. Lund

### Fulfilling the Lord's desires, not our own

After 34 years in the Church Educational System, my wife and I decided about three years ago to retire and set our feet on some different paths in life. At that point we began to make plans. We changed

our residence to be closer to children and grandchildren. I began to develop what I thought were some wonderful projects. Some were absolutely brilliant, I thought. And then one of those pivotal moments in life happened.



It was our privilege at that time to be living across the street from Elder F. Enzo Busche, now an emeritus Seventy, and his wife. One day Elder Busche taught our high priests quorum, and he cited a scripture in the book of Alma where Alma longs to have the voice of an angel. Then Alma immediately repents of those feelings, and in verse four makes a remarkable statement. He suggests that we have to be careful what we desire, for the Lord grants unto us the desires of our heart. And then came what was to me almost a stunning statement: "Whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction." God will grant unto us, according to our will, the things which we desire (see Alma 29:1-5).

I went home that day—and it's not that I felt any of my desires were wrong—but in that moment I realized that those desires were *mine*. That day I began to try to let the Lord know that what I'd like to do is fulfill *His* desires. Even then, I thought I really meant it, but I came to know that that's an easy thing to say and a difficult thing to do. As Elder Maxwell said yesterday, only when we truly yield our hearts to God can He begin to accelerate the purification and the sanctification and the perfecting process (see Helaman 3:35). We have found in the three years that have come since that time that the Lord has set our feet on different paths than we expected, and this one is the latest.

### **Gratitude for the opportunity to serve**

Just the other day, after President Hinckley called my wife and me, I was reading in the book of Deuteronomy and found a verse in the 12th chapter that came to mean a lot to me. It's put in the

form of a commandment. The Lord says, "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto" (Deuteronomy 12:18). We are grateful for this privilege to rejoice in the Lord at this new opportunity.

Since starting on those paths, we have come to learn how truly merciful God is, how deeply He loves us, and how perfectly compelling His love is for us. When I was 16 years old and not smart enough to know very much at all, the Spirit touched my heart and I realized the significance of the woman that you marry. Starting at that time I began to pray that the Lord would find for me the woman who would be my eternal companion. Those prayers were answered, and all that we now enjoy in our family with children and grandchildren is largely responsible to her.

### **Testimony**

I've come to know that Jesus is the Christ, that His and the Father's mercies are infinite and never ending, even when we're not deserving. I've always loved the Prophet Joseph Smith, but it was my privilege to spend about 10 years in an intensive and extensive study of his life, of his writings, of his teachings, and of those who knew and loved him, and I came to know that here is a prophet of prophets, one who was worthy to bring about the Restoration of this last great dispensation. And I've come to know with great power that those keys that he restored have continued unbroken to this day and now reside in our living prophet, even Gordon B. Hinckley.

Again, we rejoice in this opportunity to serve. We are deeply humbled and greatly honored, and I leave that testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder William R. Walker

### **"I'll go where you want me to go"**

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is with deep humility and great appreciation that I stand in this holy place. As a little boy growing up in Raymond, Alberta, Canada, I loved it every time we sang, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord" (*Hymns*, no. 270). Those words, each time we sang them in a sacrament meeting or Sunday School, burned commitment into my heart and soul, that I always wanted to go where the Lord wanted me to go, to say what He wanted me to say—"I'll be what you want me to be," dear Lord. That commitment seems appropriate to restate today.

I'm grateful for the sustaining vote of yesterday, and with you I sustain Presi-

dent Gordon B. Hinckley and his counselors, President Monson and President Faust, and President Packer and all of the Twelve as prophets, seers, and revelators. I bear witness that indeed they are prophets, seers, and revelators.

I love the Lord. I love this Church. I love the wonderful, faithful Saints throughout the world who do all that they can to honor their commitments and to live their religion. I bear witness that God lives and that Jesus Christ, His Son, is our Savior and our Redeemer. I love Him. I want to do all that I can to serve as He would have me serve, and I say these words and bear my witness to the truthfulness of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, may I, on behalf of all of us, express appreciation also to the Relief Society presidency and their board who have served us so well and are just recently released.

### **Finding peace in Jesus Christ**

Once again we are approaching the close of another uplifting and inspiring general conference. I always feel so energized and enlightened during these marvelous days of teaching and testimony. I know that most of you feel the same way.

Perhaps what we feel during conference is similar to the feeling experienced by the Savior's earliest disciples as they followed Him from place to place to hear Him teach the good news of His gospel. In many ways those were disheartening days for the children of Israel. Toiling under the domination of the Roman Empire, they yearned for freedom and peace. They

awaited the Messiah; they were sure He would come to deliver them from physical and political oppression. And some responded to the Savior's gospel of happiness and peace, although they did not yet fully appreciate all of its spiritual implications.

On one particular day early in the Lord's mortal ministry, a great multitude followed Him to the Sea of Galilee and pressed around Him as He stood on the shore. "So . . . he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables" (Mark 4:1-2).

Great and wonderful things were taught that day, including the parable of the sower (see Mark 4:3-20). At the end of a full day of teaching and instruction, the Lord suggested to His disciples that they cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

While they were sailing that night, "there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:37-39).

Can you imagine what the Apostles must have been thinking as they watched the very elements—the wind, the rain, and the sea—obey their Master's calm command? Although they had only recently been called to the holy apostleship, they knew Him and they loved Him and believed in Him. They had left their work and their families to follow Him. In a relatively short period of time, they had heard Him teach incredible things, and they had seen Him perform mighty miracles. But this was beyond their comprehension, and the looks on their faces must have shown it.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

"And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:40-41).

In turbulent and sometimes frightening times, the Savior's promise of infinite and eternal peace resonates with special power to us, just as His ability to calm the crashing waves must have profoundly affected those who were with Him on the Sea of Galilee that stormy night so long ago.

### **Jesus promises inner peace**

Like those who were alive at the time of His mortal ministry, there are some among us who look for physical peace and prosperity as signs of the Savior's wondrous power. We sometimes fail to understand that the everlasting peace Jesus

promises is an inner peace, born in faith, anchored by testimony, nurtured with love, and expressed through continual obedience and repentance. It is a peace of spirit that echoes through the heart and the soul. If one truly knows and experiences this inner peace, there is no fear from worldly disharmony or discord. One knows deep down inside that all is well as far as the things that really matter are concerned.

### **There is no peace in sin**

As President Hinckley instructed the brethren last night, there is no peace in sin. There may be ease, popularity, fame, and even prosperity, but there is no peace. "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). One cannot be at peace if one is living a life out of harmony with revealed truth. There is no peace in being mean-spirited or contentious. There is no peace in vulgarity, promiscuity, or permissiveness. There is no peace in addiction to drugs, alcohol, or pornography. There is no peace in being abusive to others in any way, whether it be emotionally, physically, or sexually, for those who are abusive will remain in mental and spiritual turmoil until they come to Christ in all humility and seek forgiveness through complete repentance.

At one time or another I believe everyone yearns for the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). That peace for our troubled hearts comes to us only as we follow the Light of Christ, which is "given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16), as it leads us to repent of sins and seek forgiveness. For all there is a hunger to know "the peaceable things of the kingdom" (D&C 36:2) and to taste "the fruit[s] of righteousness," which are "sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18). In every home, neighborhood, and community we ought to strive for peace and never be party to stirring up contention or division.

## Jesus gives real peace, “not as the world giveth”

Throughout scriptural history, the Lord has promised peace to His followers. The Psalmist wrote, “The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace” (Psalm 29:11). Isaiah referred to the Savior as “The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). And Nephi foresaw the day among his descendants when “the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him” (2 Nephi 26:9).

Just hours before He was to begin that glorious yet awful process of the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ made this significant promise to His Apostles: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

Was He promising His beloved associates the kind of peace the world recognizes—safety, security, with the absence of contention or tribulation? Certainly the historical record would suggest otherwise. Those original Apostles knew much of trial and persecution throughout the remainder of their lives, which is probably why the Lord added this insight to His promise: “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in *me* ye might have peace,” He continued. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; italics added).

Peace—real peace, whole-souled to the very core of your being—comes only in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When that precious truth is discovered and gospel principles are understood and applied, great peace can distill in the hearts and souls of our Heavenly Father’s children. Said the Savior through Joseph Smith, “He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even

peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

## “We will make Saints out of them”

It is sometimes amazing to see the difference this peace can have in the lives of those who accept it. While I was presiding over the Canada Toronto Mission many years ago, our missionaries began teaching a family that was in spiritual darkness. They were poor and uneducated, and their personal appearance reflected a lack of appreciation or concern for normal hygiene and grooming. But they were good, honorable people—among the honest in heart that we always pray for our missionaries to find—and they responded spiritually as they felt for the first time in their lives the peace the gospel offers.

When we learned that they were going to be baptized, Sister Ballard and I attended the baptismal service. I happened to be standing next to the bishop of the ward when the family arrived. In all honesty, I must tell you that they were quite a sight. They looked unkempt, unclean, and somewhat scruffy. Because he had been out of town for a period of time, the bishop had not yet met the newest members of his ward; so this first impression was, to say the least, unimpressive. As they walked away, I thought I could feel his knees begin to buckle.

I put my arm around this good bishop to give him my support—physically as well as spiritually. I felt prompted to say to him, “Bishop, isn’t this wonderful? We will make good Latter-day Saints out of them!”

He looked at me, and he smiled. I just couldn’t tell if he was smiling because he agreed with me, or if he thought that I might be just another overenthusiastic missionary.

The baptismal service proceeded, and the family was baptized. The next day we decided to attend that ward to make sure the family was well received when they

came to their meetings as new members of the Church.

As the family came into the chapel for sacrament meeting, I was sitting on the stand next to the bishop. The father was wearing a clean white shirt. It was not large enough for him to fasten the top button at the neck, and he was wearing a tie that I could remember seeing on one of my elders. But his face radiated with happiness and peace. The mother and daughters looked like they had been transformed from the previous day. Their dresses were not fancy, but they were clean and lovely. They also had that special gospel glow. The little boys wore white shirts that were several sizes too large for them, even with the sleeves rolled up. And they were wearing ties that almost extended down to their knees. It was obvious that the missionaries had put their own white shirts and ties on these little boys so they could come to sacrament meeting appropriately dressed.

They sat with their missionaries, and the light of the gospel literally shone from them. Alma describes this as “[receiving God’s] image in your countenances” (Alma 5:14). I leaned over to the bishop again and said, “See, Bishop? We will make Saints out of them!”

Of course that overnight physical transformation was superficial when compared to the overwhelming, more significant spiritual transformation that took place in that family as the gospel entered their hearts and lives. Through the instruction of the missionaries and the subsequent fellowshiping of their good bishop and the ward members, this entire family emerged from spiritual darkness into gospel light and truth. In that light the family was warmed, refreshed, and revitalized by the peace that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ lives. The light of the gospel truths restored to earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith began to show this family the way to the temple, where one year later they received their eternal blessings.

Again quoting the prophecies of Isaiah: “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13).

### **Be instruments of the Lord’s peace**

Once we have tasted the sweet fruit of God’s peace, we are naturally inclined to share it with others. Francis of Assisi was known as the “lover of creation” who lived most of his life ministering to the poor and the needy who were around him—including the animals. The peace he found in his service energized him and made him yearn to embrace others with it. He wrote:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not  
so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life.

On more than one occasion the Lord urged His followers to be “peacemakers,” promising that such would “be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). That concept is woven throughout the scriptures, creating a patchwork of peace through parable and proclamation:

- “Agree with thine adversary” (Matthew 5:25).
- “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44).
- “Judge not” (Matthew 7:1).
- “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).
- “Condemn not” (Luke 6:37).

- "Forgive" (Luke 6:37).
- "Love one another" (John 13:34).

Those are but a few of the scriptural instructions clearly indicating that God's peace is not to be hoarded. Rather, it is to be shared liberally with our families, our friends, and our communities. It is to be shared with the Church as well as those who are not members of our Church. While those around us may not choose to taste the sweetness and peace of the fullness of the restored gospel for themselves, surely they will be blessed by seeing it in our lives and feeling the peace of the gospel in our presence. The message of peace will grow and expand through our example.

"Live in peace," said the Apostle Paul, "and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

I am grateful that I can witness to you that Jesus is the Christ, and He is the Son of God. By following Him in faith and trust, all may find the sweet inner peace the gospel offers to us as it has been taught to us so beautifully during this conference. To this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

As we conclude this conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes, and the men's choir from BYU—Idaho, and their conductors

and organists, for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and the operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries of the world.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey the traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. I testify to you, as one who knows, that he is God's prophet here upon the earth at this time. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, I too would like to express deep appreciation for the tremendous service of Sister Smoot, Sister Jensen, Sister Dew, and their board, who have served so very faithfully and well in this great and tremendous organization for women. It is a marvelous society, 4,900,000 strong. There is nothing like it, I think, in all the world, and it touches for such tremendous good the

lives of women everywhere across the earth. Thank you, dear sisters, for what you've done. Welcome to you, Sister Parkin and your counselors, and the board which you will select.

### "Abide with me"

We now conclude this great conference. We have enjoyed a wonderful feast

at the table of the Lord. We have been instructed in His ways after His pattern.

Each of us should be a little better for this rich experience. Otherwise, our gathering has been largely in vain.

When I conclude, the choir will sing:

Abide with me; 'tis eventide.  
The day is past and gone;  
The shadows of the evening fall;  
The night is coming on.  
Within my heart a welcome guest,  
Within my home abide.  
O Savior, stay this night with me;  
Behold, 'tis eventide.  
["Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide,"  
*Hymns*, no. 165]

That pretty well sums up the feelings of our hearts as we return to our homes.

### **Jesus Christ is our central focus**

May the Spirit of our Lord accompany us and remain with us. We know not what lies ahead of us. We know not what the coming days will bring. We live in a world of uncertainty. For some, there will be great accomplishment. For others, disappointment. For some, much of rejoicing and gladness, good health, and gracious living. For others, perhaps sickness and a measure of sorrow. We do not know. But one thing we do know. Like the polar star in the heavens, regardless of what the future holds, there stands the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, certain and sure as the anchor of our immortal lives. He is the rock of our salvation, our strength, our comfort, the very focus of our faith.

In sunshine and in shadow we look to Him, and He is there to assure and smile upon us.

He is the central focus of our worship. He is the Son of the living God, the First-born of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh, who left the royal courts on high to be born as a mortal in the most humble of circumstances. Of the loneliness of His living He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son

of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

He was a man of miracles. He reached out to those in distress. He healed the sick and raised the dead. Yet for all of the love He brought into the world, He was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . he was despised," and was esteemed not (Isaiah 53:3).

We look upon His matchless life and say with the prophet Isaiah:

"He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

" . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

When the great War in Heaven was fought, Lucifer, the son of the morning, came forth with a plan that was rejected. The Father of us all, with love for us, His children, offered a better plan under which we would have freedom to choose the course of our lives. His Firstborn Son, our Elder Brother, was the key to that plan. Man would have his agency, and with that agency would go accountability. Man would walk the ways of the world and sin and stumble. But the Son of God would take upon Himself flesh and offer Himself a sacrifice to atone for the sins of all men. Through unspeakable suffering He would become the great Redeemer, the Savior of all mankind.

With some small understanding of that incomparable gift, that marvelous gift of redemption, we bow in reverent love before Him.

### **We rejoice in Christ**

As a Church we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say. Our faith, our knowledge is not based on ancient tradition, the creeds which came of

a finite understanding and out of the almost infinite discussions of men trying to arrive at a definition of the risen Christ. Our faith, our knowledge comes of the witness of a prophet in this dispensation who saw before him the great God of the universe and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. They spoke to him. He spoke with Them. He testified openly, unequivocally, and unabashedly of that great vision. It was a vision of the Almighty and of the Redeemer of the world, glorious beyond our understanding but certain and unequivocating in the knowledge which it brought. It is out of that knowledge, rooted deep in the soil of modern revelation, that we, in the words of Nephi, "talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that [we and] our children may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

### Testimony

And so, my brothers and sisters, as we bid you good-bye for a season, we repeat our firm and enduring testimony. We do it as individuals with a sure and certain knowledge. As I have said many times before, and as I now say again, I know

that God our Eternal Father lives. He is the great God of the universe. He is the Father of our spirits, with whom we may speak in prayer.

I know that Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son, the Redeemer of the world, who gave His life that we might have eternal life and who rules and reigns with His Father. I know that They are individual beings, separate and distinct one from another and yet alike in form and substance and purpose. I know that it is the work of the Almighty "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the great prophet of this dispensation through whom these truths have come. I know that this Church is the work of God, presided over and directed by Jesus Christ, whose holy name it bears.

Of these things I testify in solemnity as I leave with you, my beloved associates, my love and blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. "God be with you till we meet again" (*Hymns*, no. 152).

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The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Duane J. Huff, Stephen Schank, and Jerald F. Simon directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A men's choir from BYU—Idaho provided music for the priesthood session. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference



# INDEX

## A

**Aaronic Priesthood:** restoration of, 52–53; includes the keys of the ministering of angels, 52–53, 63. *See also* Priesthood, Young Men, Youth

**Abuse:** warning to those who, children, 7, 65–66; warning to those who, wives, 64; warning to those who, the elderly, 65; the Church cannot tolerate, 65; concern for victims of, 65–66; Church resources to assist leaders who handle cases of, 65; civil and ecclesiastical penalties for, 66; show kindness to those who repent of committing, 66; there is no peace in, of others, 103

**Accountability:** baptism is necessary only after children reach the age of, 7; goes with agency in the Father's plan, 107

**Activation:** of those who are not full participants in the Church, 37–38, 52; importance of friendship in, 52, 53; reasons some people become less active, 95–96

**Adversary:** is pleased when we are distracted by selfish concerns and appetites, 13; continually watch for deceptions of, 33; wants us to follow worldly ways and selfish ambitions, 33; teaches that unquestioning obedience is not intelligent, 33; wants us to rely on the learning of the world, 34; power of, will increase, 34; how to overcome the deceptions of, 34; put on the armor of God to withstand, 40; uses new technologies to spread evil, 46; the Holy Ghost can protect us from, 46, 53; would diminish faith and dilute priesthood power, 53; wants us to surrender our agency to addictive behavior, 53; some think they are invincible to the temptations of, 54–56; inspires jealousy, 72; wants us to feel diminished by others' success, 72; the Holy Ghost can dispel the darkness of, 81; the Light of Christ will form a protective shield against, 81; opposed the Lord even before the world was formed, 88; tries to replace love with anger and hostility, 97, 98

**Adversity:** refines parents of a disabled girl, 7; law of tithing revealed at a time of great, 11; refines Susanna Stone Lloyd

as she is faithful, 12–13; comes to everyone, 13; we discover God-given strengths as we strive to deal with, 14; following Jesus does not free us from, 17–18; God will help us through, 21, 32; the Savior understands our, 32, 76; the Spirit affirms that there is purpose in, 39; the gospel brings perspective during, 39–40; Joseph's example during, 47, 48; the Lord was with Joseph during, 48; be prepared for, 49; great happiness awaits those who endure, 51; story of prayers sustaining James E. Faust in a time of, 68–69; faced by Joseph Smith, 74, 76; the plan of salvation brings perspective during, 74, 75; we knew of, when we chose to come to earth, 75; is made right by the Atonement, 75, 76; faith can help us see the good during, 75; the works of God are manifest in how we face, 76; can be for our good, 76; firm foundations help us bear, 89–90; stories of parents, a wife, and a missionary responding faithfully to, 90; feeling God's love helps a woman be faithful during, 97; Satan tries to sour our hearts with anger during, 98; the Savior's promise of peace resonates in times of, 103. *See also* Tribulation

**Agency:** we obey as an expression of, 33–34; Satan wants us to surrender, to addictive behavior, 53; we exercised, in the pre-mortal existence, 75; includes accountability, 107; is part of the Father's plan, 107. *See also* Freedom

**Alcohol:** just one use of, can lead to addiction, 55; there is no peace in addiction to, 103

**Amado, Carlos H.,** 94

**Angels:** may minister to us, 48, 53, 63, 79; Aaronic Priesthood includes the keys of the ministering of, 52–53, 63; young men counseled to be ministering, 53; witness of the Holy Ghost is more powerful than seeing, 57; will bear up followers of Christ, 60; encircle and minister to little children, 78

**Apostles:** sustain and support Gordon B. Hinckley, 18; have taught the principle of obedience, 35; are given for the perfecting of the Saints, 37; Christ organized ancient Church with, 82; Christ leads His

Church today through revelation to, 83; the Church is built on a foundation of, 88, 92; testimony of, about Christ, 92–93; are prophets, seers, and revelators, 102

**Appearances:** can be deceptive, 33; man looks on, but the Lord looks on the heart, 61

**Atonement (of Jesus):** those who baptize little children set, at naught, 7; disciples are born again through, 32; being teachable activates the full blessings of, 36; revelations of Joseph Smith bear testimony of, 37; sacrifice is the essence of, 43–44; the Savior achieved submissiveness during, 44; Christ offered in the premortal existence to perform, 75, 88; brings peace, hope, forgiveness, and resurrection out of suffering, sin, and death, 75; is infinite and eternal, 75, 76; is personal, 76; gives hope to the suffering, 76; pays the price for our transgressions and suffering, 76; brought excruciating pain, 76; is for all mankind, 82, 92, 107; is central to the plan of salvation, 88, 107; Christ was foreordained for, 88; heals us, 107; we learned of, in the premortal existence, 107. *See also* Jesus Christ

**Auditing Department Report, 25**

## B

**Ballard, M. Russell, 102**

**Banks, Ben B., 49**

**Baptism:** little children do not need, until they reach the age of accountability, 7; do not make the steps after, too high for new converts, 8; is part of following Jesus, 17; of converts during 2001, 25; covenant made at, to bear one another's burdens, 29; sacrament renews the cleansing effect of, 38; gift of the Holy Ghost is received after, 46, 80, 82; covenant we make at, 82; of Jesus Christ, 82; of the dead was instituted before the foundation of the world, 89

**Bishops:** resources for, in handling cases of abuse, 65

**Bodies:** worship of, 43; keep, clean from the sins of the world, 51

**Book of Mormon:** warns of boastfulness and pride, 50; includes revelation reserved for the latter days, 89

## C

**Callings:** priesthood office makes no difference in magnifying, 53; counsel to those who feel unable to respond to, 61; members challenged to accept, 85; we must magnify, to receive Jesus, 93

**Charity:** is the greatest virtue, 73; is the pure love of Christ, 96; examples of, 96; encompasses all divine attributes, 96; is bestowed only on true followers of Christ, 96; distinction between love and, 96, 98; pray to receive, 97; the fruits of, 98. *See also* Love

**Chastity:** story of Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife, 47–48; missionaries must strictly observe the law of, 63

**Children:** stories of suffering, 6; are precious, 6–7; warning against abuse of, 7, 65–66; teach, to walk in the ways of truth, 7; are blameless before God and alive in Christ, 7; little, do not need baptism, 7; should not be ignored or neglected, 7–8; parents are to teach, love, and provide for, 8; be like, 8, 41; Jesus' concern for, 8; help adults understand their relationship with God, 9; mothers glorify God in bearing and caring for, 9, 88; teach, to pay tithing, 10; should honor their parents, 65; should assist elderly parents, 65; story of Jesus blessing and angels encircling, 77–78; need regular affirmations of their worth, 78; of today have journeys as taxing as the westward migration, 79; build the backs of, to bear burdens, 79; are trying to be like Jesus, 79; speak the language of love to, 79; need loving gospel mentors, 79; of the covenant were designated in the premortal realm, 88. *See also* Family, Parents, Youth

**Church:** modest beginnings of, 2; growth of, 3, 29; Winter Olympics created positive impressions of, 3–4; new members of,

need good friends, 8, 29–32, 52, 89; members of, make sacrifices to bless others, 12; membership statistics, 25; membership in, is not synonymous with conversion, 27; testify of restoration of, to new members, 32; blessings of participation in, 37–40, 95; teachings and work of, are essential for immortality and eternal life, 37; mission of, is to edify and exalt the children of God, 37; some have mistaken expectations of, 37–38; attend, in order to give, not only to get, 38; gives us opportunities to serve, 38; service in, brings conversion, 38; blessings of associating with good people in, 39; leaders of, give counsel and warnings, 40; testimony of, may not come until faith is tried, 56; has never moved more strongly than it is now to accomplish its mission, 57; position of, on abuse, 65–66; work of, is to save souls, 66; is being brought out of obscurity, 80, 83; restoration of, 83, 92, 94; Jesus Christ leads, 83, 108; members of, should accept callings, 85; lifts people across the earth, 86; solid foundation of, 87–90; foundation of, was established in the premortal existence, 88, 90; will not be moved from its place, 89; our need to attend, 95; reasons some people stop attending, 95–96; the Lord loves the women of, 100; is the work of God, 108

**Church Auditing Department Report, 25**

**Church Statistical Report, 25**

**Cigarettes:** just one use of, can lead to addiction, 55

**Clegg, Gayle M., 77**

**Comfort:** the Holy Ghost gives, 17, 31, 39, 56, 80, 95; from priesthood blessings, 40; giving, to those who have heavy burdens, 74, 76; of a six-year-old girl, 77

**Comforter.** *See* Holy Ghost

**Commandments:** peace and eternal life promised to those who obey, 16; given to help us come to fulness of joy, 17; those who are truly converted are determined to keep, 27; we renew our covenant to keep, when we partake of the sacrament, 30, 82; unquestioning obedience to, is not blind obedience, 33–34; Abraham

desired to keep, 35; blessings come from keeping, 40; to love God are constantly operative, 41; are not suspended by our pursuit of a lesser good, 43; happiness comes from keeping, 50, 51; acquire spiritual knowledge by keeping, 57; not to covet are meant to keep us from hurting ourselves, 73; receive spiritual light by obeying, 81; to pay tithing is a witness of God's love, 86; to rejoice before the Lord, 101. *See also* Obedience

**Condie, Spencer J., 51**

**Consecration:** ultimate, is yielding up heart, soul, and mind to God, 41; seems daunting to many, 41, 101; full, does not hold back part, 41–44; returns to God what is His, 43–44; lack of full, betrays our prospective selves, 44. *See also* Submissiveness

**Contention:** hidden wedge of, 21–22; is of the devil, 22; we should eliminate, 22; of a man who was always angry, 97; there is no peace in, 103; do not stir up, 103

**Conversion:** shifts our focus from self to others, 13; insights from Peter about true, 26–27; definition of true, 27; includes a motivating faith, not merely mental acceptance, 27; includes loving God and being determined to obey His commandments, 27; is the fruit of faith, repentance, and obedience, 27, 28; strengthens capacity to do what is right, 28; insights from the parable of the sower about, 28; blessings of true, 28–29; of Nkosiyo Eddie Lupahla, 30; is a change in our natures, 31; those who are not seeking, miss essential experiences, 37; service helps bring about, 38; partaking of the sacrament is essential to, 38; is a “mighty change” in our hearts, 40; seek, with real intent, 95

**Converts.** *See* New members

**Cook, Gene R., 96**

**Councils:** teach youth to work together in, 52

**Covenants:** paying tithing roots family in making and keeping, 12; made at baptism to bear one another's burdens and

be a friend, 29; renewal of baptismal, by partaking of the sacrament, 30–31, 38, 82, 95; the Lord is bound by, to bless us as we are faithful, 48; James E. Faust's commitment to remain true to, 69

**Covetousness.** *See* Envy

## D

**Death:** the Savior loosed the bands of, 32, 75, 88; the Holy Ghost strengthens Dallin H. Oaks after, of loved ones, 39

**Debt:** many surrender freedom to, 15–16; we are always in Christ's, 100

**Devil.** *See* Adversary

**Disabilities:** challenges and blessings of a daughter who has, 7; faithfulness of parents whose child has, 90

**Discipleship:** of the early Apostles who left their nets to follow Jesus, 15; includes loving others, 22; includes being teachable, 35, 36; is a "contact sport," 42

**Discouragement:** we cannot afford to waste our lives in self-pity and, 14. *See also* Adversity

**Doctrine:** of Christ is that contention should be done away, 22; no, more critical than obedience, 34–35; blessings of Jesus Christ's, 39; blessings of gospel, in the life of Dallin H. Oaks, 39; do God's will to know of the, 40; we go to church to learn, 95

**Doubt:** some, is normal as a testimony develops, 56

**Drugs:** just one use of, can lead to addiction, 55; there is no peace in addiction to, 103

## E

**Edgley, Richard C.,** 74

**Elderly:** warning against abuse of, 65

**Endurance:** to the end, 29; service in the kingdom is crucial to, 31; brings happi-

ness, 51; a firm foundation is necessary for, 87

**Envy:** of the prodigal son's older brother, 71–72; makes us feel diminished by others' success, 72, 73; is inspired by Lucifer, 72; is widespread, 72, 73; allurements and ways of the world encourage, 72, 73; commandment against, is meant to keep us from hurting ourselves, 73; how to overcome, 73–74

**Eternal life:** promised to those who obey the commandments, 16; definition of, 16; no amount of money can purchase, 16–17; Jesus has given us the opportunity for, 40; he that hath, is rich, 92; is God's greatest gift, 92; is to live as families in God's presence, 92, 95; know God and Christ to obtain, 92, 93. *See also* Exaltation

**Evil:** follow Joseph's example when confronted with, 47; avoid the appearance of, 47; the Light of Christ is given for us to know good from, 80, 103. *See also* Adversary, Sin

**Exaltation:** Church's mission is to exalt the children of God, 37. *See also* Eternal life

**Example:** be, in our homes, 22; Jesus taught by precept and, 31; set, for new members, 32; Jesus', of total submissiveness, 44; of Joseph of Egypt, 46–48; let others see your good works, 66, 82

**Eyring, Henry B.,** 29

## F

**Faith:** Perpetual Education Fund strengthens a young man's, 5; exercise, by paying tithing, 12; is required during trials, 13; follow the Savior by exercising, 17; the converted have a motivating, in Jesus, 27; works a transformation, 27; a moving testimony vitalizes, 27; true conversion is a fruit of, 27; comes by hearing the word of God, 27; when we ask in, our natures can change, 31; if we ask in, we can understand how new members feel, 32; "faith obedience," 33–35; of Abraham, 34; of Nephi, 34; obedience requires, 34, 35, 36; exercising, opens

communication with the Lord, 36; of Dallin H. Oaks's widowed mother in raising children, 39–40; Laman and Lemuel lacked, 42; work mighty miracles through, 52, 53; Satan would diminish, 53; testimony may not come until, has been tried, 56; knowledge about the Savior comes through, 57; we should pray with, 68; we exercised, in the pre-mortal existence, 74–75; have the same, as when we chose to come to earth, 75; brings assurance during trials, 75; the Holy Ghost is received by those who follow the principle of, 80; a call for greater, 83–86; lights the way in our eternal journey, 84; story of a man taking steps for, to grow, 84–85; members of the Church should accept responsibilities in, 85; gives strength to this work, 86; we walk by, 86; great promises to those who walk by, 86; of investigators needs to be warmed by the flames of members, 86; we have foundations to support our, 89, 90; of parents of a disabled child, 90; gives hope when there is no hope, 90; history of Joseph Smith a gift of, 94; peace comes through, 103, 104, 106; the Redeemer is the focus of our, 107; our, in Christ comes from the witness of a prophet, 107–8

**Faithfulness:** of Church members in following the Savior, 18; the truly faithful receive all that God hath, 43; the Lord blesses us according to our, 48; leads to happiness, 50; great promises for, 86. *See also* Obedience

**Family:** can be eternal, 12, 39, 40; sisters counseled to strengthen, 13; strive for unity in, 14; priesthood holders bless their, 40, 66; those who gamble put, at risk, 55–56; the Lord's assurance to missionaries about their, 60; at the Judgment we will be asked searching questions about our relations with, 64; importance of praying as a, 69; eternal life is to live as, in God's presence, 92, 95. *See also* Children, Fathers, Home, Husbands, Mothers, Parents, Wives

**Fasting:** affects our relationship with the Savior, 13; can help us overcome

addictive behaviors, 53; humbles us and brings us more in tune with God, 68; helps generate spiritual light, 81. *See also* Fast offerings

**Fast offerings:** we are blessed when we pay, 39; story of a young woman paying, faithfully, 85. *See also* Fasting

**Father in Heaven.** *See* God

**Fathers:** Perpetual Education Fund helps a young man prepare to become a better, 5; teach children responsibility, 8; great things required of, 9; story of Joseph B. Wirthlin spending time required to be a good father, 16; Church leaders offer counsel and inspiration to, 40; who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood can give blessings to family members, 40; commandment to honor, 65. *See also* Family, Husbands, Parents

**Faust, James E.,** 54, 67

**First Vision:** 18, 32, 83, 92, 95, 108. *See also* Smith, Joseph

**Foreordination:** of Jesus Christ, 88; of men to hold the priesthood, 88; of prophets, 88

**Forgiveness:** of a bishop's oversight prevents a hidden wedge, 20; heals, 20; everyone needs, 20–21; of the Savior of His crucifiers, 21; of yourself can remove a hid-den wedge to happiness, 21; is divine, 21; is necessary to lay hid-den wedges to rest, 21; repairs a friendship, 22; those who abuse must ask for, 64, 103; prayer is an opportunity to request, 67; Light of Christ leads us to seek, 103. *See also* Repentance

**Freedom:** many surrender, to debt, 15–16; addictions take away, 55–56. *See also* Agency

**Friendship:** of new members, 8, 29–32, 52, 89; forgiveness restores, 21, 22; the danger of wrong, 28; covenant made at baptism to be a friend, 29; brings a young man to the gospel, 29–31; of the Savior, 32, 60; all of us need, 32; will bless many generations, 32; and activation, 52, 53

## G

**Gambling:** Church leaders have warned us to avoid, 40; trying, just once can lead to addiction, 55–56

**General Authorities present,** 1

**General priesthood session,** 44

**Goals:** young men encouraged to set worthy, 50; help us learn self-discipline and accomplish much, 50; strive with greater urgency for spiritual, 57

**God:** children help us understand our relationship with, 9; love of, 12, 21, 27, 35, 72, 74, 86, 90, 96–98, 101; become more dependent on, 13; avoid things that pull us away from, 15; gives us commandments to help us have joy, 17; appeared to Joseph Smith, 18, 32, 83, 92, 95, 108; come to, by Jesus Christ, 18, 92, 93; is mindful of us, 21; yield hearts to, 28, 37, 41, 101; communicates clearly with His children, 34; open the path of communication from, 35; wisdom of, is greater than our own, 36; the faithful will dwell with, 40; is the author of the plan of salvation, 40, 107; do not please other gods instead of, 42–43; acknowledge the hand of, 43, 50, 97; has given us everything, 43; wants us back in His presence, 49, 71; all things are possible with, 61; priesthood comes from, 62, 66; has spoken in this dispensation, 62; do not take the name of, in vain, 63; prayer is the lifeline between man and, 67; possesses all knowledge and love, 67; we pray to, in the name of Jesus Christ, 67, 84; fasting brings us more in tune with, 68; knows our needs, 68, 94; wants each of His children back in His arms, 71; does not compare His children, 72; will help us overcome the tendency to envy and covet, 73; all may partake of the goodness of, 73; works of, are manifest in how we face trials, 76; we can always speak to, 77; to know, is life eternal, 92; develop a desire to know, as Joseph Smith had, 94; leads us to truth, 94; study the scriptures to know, 94; will answer our sincere petitions, 95; Joseph Smith showed how to draw closer to, 96; loves

us first and most even when we merit it the least, 97; recognize, receive, and convey the love of, 97–98; gratitude is a form of returning love to, 97

**Gospel:** power of, is to bless little children, 9; restoration of, 18, 32, 56; conversion implies a motivating faith in, 27; blessings of, 39; is a light to our path, 39; brings perspective during adversity, 39–40; work mighty miracles through sharing, 53; teach, to children, 79; without, we would be doomed to darkness, 81; we must be fully engaged in living, to generate sufficient spiritual light, 81; underpinnings of, were in place before the world was, 88, 89; we must receive the fulness of, to receive Christ, 93; peace comes when we understand and apply principles of, 104; causes spiritual transformation, 105

**Grace:** of the Lord is sufficient, 44, 73

**Gratitude:** acknowledge the hand of God, 43, 50, 97; prayer is an opportunity to express, 67; is the ability to see, feel, and receive love, 97; is a form of returning love to God, 97

## H

**Hales, Robert D.,** 79

**Happiness:** following Jesus brings, beyond our ability to comprehend, 17; is conditioned on degree of conversion, 27, 28; God's plan of, 34, 37, 75; the faithful will dwell in never-ending, 40; greatest, is reserved for those willing to stretch and pay the cost, 44; is the object of our existence, 50; comes from obedience, 50; children need, 79; wickedness never was, 103. *See also* Joy

**Healing:** forgiveness brings, 20; from Jesus, 29, 76, 82, 104, 107; from priesthood blessings, 40. *See also* Miracles

**Heavenly Father.** *See* God

**Hinckley, Gordon B.:** addresses of, 2, 62, 83, 106; is the Lord's mouthpiece, 18; pray for, 70; we need to hear and follow, 57; keys reside in, 101

**Holland, Jeffrey R.,** 71

**Holy Ghost:** is a guide, 9, 31, 35, 36, 46, 48, 56, 95; is a protection, 9, 46, 53; testifies of the Father and Son, 9, 38, 80, 97; is a comforter, 17, 31, 39, 56, 80, 95; follow the Savior by receiving the gift of, 17; testimony comes through, 27–28, 31, 56, 68, 95; teachings of the Savior can come through, 28; will help identify changes we need to make, 29; companionship of, 30, 31, 32, 36, 49, 64, 80, 82; will show us what we should do, 30, 36, 53; teaches us to pray, 31; is a cleansing agent, 31, 80; we must choose to receive the gift of, 31; helps us feel the Savior's love, 32; testifies of truth, 32, 38, 53; new members need companionship of, to endure, 32; promptings from, are clear, 34; leads us back to God, 36, 80; being teachable makes us sensitive to, 36; sacrament helps us have the companionship of, 38; is the greatest antivirus program, 46; rely on, in discerning right from wrong, 46; Joseph of Egypt relied on, 46; warns us of evil, 48; angels will minister to those who heed, 48; bad language can deny us of the companionship of, 49–50; seek, to help choose the right, 50; will direct us as we feast on the scriptures, 53; teaches what we cannot teach one another, 53; helps us see more clearly, 56; can increase our potential, 56; witness of, is more powerful than seeing an angel, 57; will be our constant companion if we let virtue garnish our thoughts, 64; gift of, is bestowed by the laying on of hands, 80; gift of, is received after faith, repentance, and baptism, 80; is the third member of the Godhead, 80; Satan departs when the light of, is present, 81; be true to the promptings of, 82; will enlighten those who walk by faith, 86; God answers prayers through, 95; helps us understand God, 96; strengthen impressions we feel from, 96; reveals Christ to us, 97; righteous feelings come from, 98

**Home:** be examples in, 22; no other success can compensate for failure in, 64; most important of the Lord's work is done in, 64; strive for peace in, 103. *See also* Family, Parents

**Honesty:** young men must not be dishonest, 63

**Hope:** for a woman who could not forgive herself, 21; our example and discipleship may give, to new members and others, 32; Jesus brings, out of hopelessness, 75; the Atonement gives, during trials, 76; faith will give, when there is no, 90

**Humility:** is necessary to receive divine instruction, 35–36; submissiveness requires, 42; brings us in tune with God, 68; receive God's love in, 97. *See also* Meekness, Submissiveness

**Husbands:** story of Joseph B. Wirthlin spending time required to be a good husband, 16; Church leaders offer counsel and inspiration to, 40; warned not to abuse their wives, 64–65. *See also* Marriage

## I

**Immortality:** means we will never die, 16; the Savior has assured us of, 40; the work of God is to bring to pass our, 108. *See also* Resurrection, Salvation

**Individual worth:** is not determined by business and other worldly measures, 16; does not fluctuate like the stock market, 42

**Internet:** warning against bad sites on, 47, 56

## J

**Jealousy.** *See* Envy

**Jesus Christ:** Atonement of (*see* Atonement); Church of (*see* Church); faith in (*see* Faith); gospel of (*see* Gospel); Resurrection of (*see* Resurrection); Second Coming of (*see* Second Coming); love of, for children, 8, 78; fasting, prayer, and scripture study affect our relationship with, 13; come unto Him, 14, 29, 73; calls us to follow Him, 15–18, 92; examples of modern nets that keep us from following, 15–16; promises peace, 16, 103–6; made immortality and eternal life

possible, 16; how to follow, 17; following, does not free us from adversity, 17; appeared to Joseph Smith, 18, 32, 83, 92, 95, 108; leave worldly nets and follow, 18; come to the Father by, 18, 92; forgave His crucifiers, 21; taught us to love one another, 22, 31, 98; knows us very well, 26; showed love to Peter, 27; loves us, 29, 31–32, 33, 73; watches over new members, 32; will help us love new members, 32; knows our trials and will succor us, 32, 76; being teachable makes us disciples of, 36; gives assurance of immortality and opportunity for eternal life, 40; be valiant in the testimony of, 42; become more like, 42, 52, 93, 98; never lost His focus, 43; submissiveness of, during the Atonement, 44, 70; grace of, is sufficient, 44; promised to be with us always, 61; has spoken in this dispensation, 62; we pray to God in the name of, 67, 84; prayers of, 67, 68, 70, 92; prepared in the premortal life to perform the Atonement, 75, 88, 107; is the light and life of the world, 82, 93; baptism of, 82; was the head of the ancient Church, 82; ascension of, 83; guides the Church today, 83; lights the way, 85; is the chief cornerstone of the Church, 88, 92; is the only sure foundation, 89; testimony of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, 92–93; is the Creator, 92; is the Only Begotten, 92, 107; visited ancient America, 92; each of us will be judged by, 93; we must receive, to know, 93; recognize the love and hand of, 97; what we think of, will determine what we are, 99; calmed the sea of Galilee, 102–3; gives real peace, 103–4; taught followers to be peacemakers, 105–6; is like the polar star, 107; is the focus of our faith and worship, 107; condescension of, 107; we rejoice in, 107–8; our knowledge of, comes from the witness of Joseph Smith, 108

**Joy:** commandments help us come to a fulness of, 17; Heavenly Father wants us to have, 49; in youth activities, 52; share, with others, 52; comes from following the prophet, 57; faith will give us, 90; story of the Restoration is a source of, 94; of going to church, 95. *See also* Happiness

## K

**Kingdom of God:** pioneer women sacrificed for, 14; service in, is crucial to enduring, 31; be worthy to build, 51; we need to come to know, 95

**Knowledge:** dangers of relying on the world's, 34; living the Word of Wisdom brings increased, 39; how to acquire spiritual, 57; comes from the witness of Joseph Smith, 108. *See also* Education

## L

**Language:** habit of using bad, becomes harder to break with time, 49–50; bad, can deny us of the companionship of the Holy Ghost, 49–50; we cannot use bad, and have the ministering of angels, 63; answered prayer is a universal, 77; universal, of love, 79. *See also* Profanity

**Leaders:** counsel and warnings from, 40; youth urged to heed, 40, 81; training future, 52

**Light:** bring up children in, 8; the gospel is a, to our path, 39; let our, shine, 66, 82; of Christ is given to all 80, 103; dispels darkness, 80–81; the Savior is our, 81, 82–83, 93; of the Lord will form a protective shield from the adversary, 81; must be generated through daily righteousness, 81; we must be fully engaged in living the gospel to generate sufficient, 81; grows brighter and brighter, 81, 84; the path to, 82; be, to others, 82; put on the “armour of,” 82; that which is of God is, 84; is lost when we learn truths and then cease to practice them, 96

**Love:** disabled child brings, to a family, 7; of God, 12, 21, 27, 35, 72, 74, 86, 90, 96–98, 101; Christ taught us to, one another, 22, 31–32, 98, 105–6; is evidence of discipleship, 22; shown by Jesus to Peter at a difficult time, 27; of the Savior, 29, 31–32, 33, 73; new members as Christ loves them, 31–32; priesthood is to be used in, 63; children need, 79; we feast upon God's, when we receive His word, 89; distinction between charity and, 96,



98; Satan tries to destroy, 97; is multiplied when shared, 97; recognize God's, 97; receive God's, in humility, 97-98; express, to God, 97; feel God's, day by day, 98; convey God's, 98; destroyers of, 98-99; of the Lord for the women of the Church, 100; peace the Savior promised is nurtured with, 103. *See also* Charity

**Lund, Gerald N.**, 100

## M

**Madsen, John M.**, 92

**Marriage:** eternal, shows our place in mortality and our potential in eternity, 40; young men counseled to set goal of temple, 50; young men counseled to prepare for, 52; counsel for those facing decisions about, 53; for returned missionaries there should be no alternative to temple, 64; counsel to returned missionaries about purity preceding, 64; man and woman walk side by side in, 64; warning against abuse in, 64-65. *See also* Husbands, Wives, Women

**Maxwell, Neal A.**, 41

**Meditation:** Joseph Smith's example of, 95; helps us come to a knowledge of eternal truths, 95

**Meekness:** acknowledges God's hand, 43; Moses' example of, 43. *See also* Humility, Submissiveness

**Melchizedek Priesthood.** *See* Priesthood

**Men.** *See* Fathers, Husbands

**Mercy:** of Jesus Christ, 5, 32, 48, 75

**Mind.** *See* Thoughts

**Miracles:** of change in our natures, 31; Atonement is Jesus' transcending miracle, 44; use the priesthood to work mighty, 52, 53; when a family prays together, 69; Jesus was a man of, 107. *See also* Healing

**Missionaries:** help investigators gain a testimony of tithing, 11; number of,

serving in 2001, 25; pray and then go, 59-60; revelations from the Doctrine and Covenants concerning, 60; must not compromise the divine power they carry, 63; warning to, 63-64; are expected to maintain highest standards of conduct, 63-64; should be careful not to destroy their eligibility for temple marriage, 64; teach a man to pray, 84; story of a faithful, who was afflicted with cancer, 90; story of, baptizing a poor family in Toronto, 104-5. *See also* Missionary work, Returned missionaries

**Missionary work:** of Wilford Woodruff, 51-52; of Walter Krause, 60. *See also* Missionaries, Returned missionaries

**Monson, Thomas S.**, 19, 58

**Mothers:** nothing compares with, who give children comfort and assurance, 8; glorify God in bearing and caring for children, 9, 88; Dallin H. Oaks's mother, 39-40; a tragedy when a man demeans the mother of his children, 64; commandment to honor, 65. *See also* Family, Parents, Women

**Music:** summary of, 108

**Mutual:** activities should help youth grow in wisdom, 52; invite those who are less active and who belong to other faiths to, 52

## N

**Neighbors:** are children of God, 52; reach out to, 52; God does not measure us against, 72

**Nelson, Russell M.**, 83

**New members:** show friendship to, 8, 29-32, 52, 89; do not make steps too high for, 8; need milk, not meat, 8; counseled to pay tithing, 11; try to feel what, feel, 29-30, 32; must choose to live the gospel, 31; how to help bear the burdens of, 31-32; love, as Christ loves, 31-32; the Savior watches over, 32; be an example to, 32; testify of the truth to, 32; need repeated confirmations of truth, 32; need the com-

panionship of the Holy Ghost to endure, 32; need to be sustained by a friend, a call to serve, and the word of God, 89

## O

**Oaks, Dallin H.,** 37

**Obedience:** follow the Savior by, 17; true conversion includes a commitment to, 27; our, determines how converted we are, 28; the Holy Ghost becomes our companion through, 31; be an example of, to new members, 32; Satan teaches that unquestioning, is not intelligent, 33; unquestioning, is not blind, 33–34; is an expression of agency and faith, not compulsion, 33–34; of Abraham, 34, 35; of Nephi, 34, 36, 59; is a matter of trust in God and His prophets, 34; is necessary in our learning, 34; counsel against selective, 34; is necessary to avoid Satan's deceptions, 34; no doctrine more critical than, 34–35; all scriptures and prophets teach, 35; is necessary even when we do not understand the reason for the law, 35; wear life jackets of, 35; some would prefer to change the rules rather than obey them, 35; to divine instruction we receive, 36; blessings of, 39, 40; the Lord is bound when we obey, 40, 48; did not free Joseph from challenges, 48; brings happiness, 50, 51; of the widow who fed Elijah, 58–59; is necessary each day to generate protective spiritual light, 81; blessing are predicated upon, 88; Joseph Smith's example of, 96; as our, increases, we receive more grace, 98; peace of Christ expressed through, 103. *See also* Commandments, Faithfulness

**Olympics:** positive impressions of the Church during, 3–5, 80; laudatory comments of journalists during, 3–4; media exposure of the Church during, 3–4; motto of, applied to Church members, 57; brought partial fulfillment of prophecies, 80; helped bring the Church out of obscurity, 80

**Ordinances:** receive, that are necessary to enter God's presence, 93; we go to church to receive, of salvation, 95

## P

**Packer, Boyd K.,** 6

**Parents:** are to teach and provide for their children, 7–8; the Lord strengthens single, 8; are to bring up children in light and truth, 8; should not abandon children, 8; children should honor, 65; children should assist elderly, 65; struggles of single, 75; youth counseled to listen to the teachings of, 81; story of, who face challenges faithfully, 90. *See also* Children, Family, Fathers, Home, Mothers

**Parkin, Bonnie D.,** 45

**Peace:** paying tithing brings a special, 12; promised to those who come unto Christ, 16; understanding the purpose of life brings, 39; Jesus brings, out of pain and suffering, 75; we can find, in adversity by extending ourselves to others, 76; the Holy Ghost brings, 80; destroyers of, 97, 98; finding, in Jesus Christ, 102–3; the Savior's promise of, resonates in times of difficulty, 103; Jesus promises inner, 103; comes from faith in Christ, 103, 104, 106; there is no, in sin, 103; comes only as we follow the Light of Christ, 103; Jesus gives real, not as the world giveth, 104; be instruments of the Lord's, 105–6

**Perpetual Education Fund:** generous contributions have built a solid foundation for, 5; is already bringing about much good, 5; testimony of a young man who has been blessed by, 5

**Perry, L. Tom,** 45

**Plan of happiness:** obedience is part of, 34; participation in the Church is essential to, 37; was presented in the premortal existence, 74–75. *See also* Plan of salvation

**Plan of salvation:** God is the author of, 40; Jesus Christ made possible, 40; understanding of, puts trials in perspective, 74, 75; was presented in the premortal existence, 74–75, 107; all that we experience

is part of, 75; was prepared before the foundation of the earth, 88; the Atonement is central to, 88, 107; includes agency and accountability, 107. *See also* Plan of happiness; Salvation

**Pornography:** Church leaders have warned us to avoid, 40; viewing, just once can lead to addiction, 56; there is no peace in addiction to, 103

**Prayer:** affects our relationship with God, 13; the Spirit teaches us to pray, while the evil spirit teaches us not to pray, 31; pray always, 31, 68; Joseph Smith's example of, 53, 69–70, 94; of Tahitian sea captains, 58; and action are both necessary, 58–61; great is the power of, 67; we can approach God in, at any time and place, 67; is the lifeline between man and God, 67; explanation of what prayer is, 67; of the Savior, 67, 68, 70, 92; requires sincerity and effort, 68; and fasting, 68; should be in our hearts continually, 68; Amulek's counsel about, 68; of James E. Faust during World War II, 68–69; importance of family, 69; of a family that a bomb would not explode, 69; should acknowledge submission to the Lord's will, 70; helps us overcome the tendency to envy and covet, 73; of a six-year-old brings comfort, 77; language of, is universal, 77; missionaries teach a man about, 84; God answers, according to our sincerity, 95

**Premortal life:** the Father's plan was presented in, 74–75, 107; we learned of the trials of mortality during, 75; Christ was foreordained in, for the Atonement, 75, 88; we exercised faith during, 75; the foundation of the Church and gospel were established during, 88–89; opposition from the adversary during, 88; foreordination of prophets and other priesthood holders during, 88; gifts given to sisters during, 88; children of the covenant designated during, 88; conditions for receiving blessings established during, 88; work of redeeming the dead instituted during, 89

**Preparation:** to face opposition and hardship, 49; of young men for missions, marriage, and employment, 52

**Pride:** overcome, to receive divine instruction, 35–36; causes us to take credit ourselves rather than give it to God, 43, 50; of people in the Book of Mormon caused them to boast and fall away, 50; priesthood holders must not gratify, 62, 63; of a man who was always angry, 97; beware of, 98–99

**Priesthood:** blessings of healing, comfort, and guidance, 40; multiplies powers, abilities, and discernment, 45; evidence in the scriptures of young men receiving, 46–47; it is a blessing to bear, 48; restoration of, 52–53, 62, 80, 92; Satan would dilute the power of, 53; should be used to bless others, 53–54; use, to work mighty miracles, 53–54; holders of, should be doers of the word, 61; comes from God, 62; be worthy to exercise, 62–63, 66; holders of, must not exercise unrighteous dominion, 62, 63; holders of, must not indulge in sin, 63; parameters for exercising, 63; is not a cloak to put on and take off at will, 63; holders of, must not abuse others, 64–65; authority of, reaches into the eternities, 66; safeguard and cherish, 66; noble and great men foreordained to hold, 88; magnify, to receive Jesus, 93; power of, maintained by attributes of godliness, 96–97. *See also* Aaronic Priesthood

**Priesthood session, general, 44**

**Priorities:** modern “nets” keep us from higher, of following Christ, 15–16; dangers of being too busy, 16; inordinate pursuit of even good things can cause us to omit the weightier matters, 43

**Profanity:** inappropriate entertainment desensitizes us to, 56; young men must not indulge in, 63. *See also* Language

**Prophecy:** fulfillment of Brigham Young's, concerning the Salt Lake Valley, 4–5; hosting of Olympics has partially fulfilled, 80

**Prophets:** putting aside words of, prevents us from following Christ, 17; testified that Christ would suffer our pains and afflictions, 32; Satan teaches that following, is not thinking for ourselves, 33;

obedience is a matter of whether or not we trust, 34; we must follow, to avoid Satan's deceptions, 34; all, teach the principle of obedience, 35; principles taught by, can place Christ deeply in our lives, 36; are given for the perfecting of the Saints, 37; study the lives of, 48; follow the counsel of, 51, 57; Christ organized the ancient Church with, 82; Christ leads His Church today through, 83; the Church is built on the foundation of, 88, 92; foreordination of, 88

**Prosperity:** can keep us from following Christ, 15; early Apostles sacrificed, to follow Christ, 15; do not look for, as a sign of the Savior's power, 103. *See also* Wealth

## R

**Rationalization:** resisting, to disobey shows how truly converted we are, 28; of giving credit to ourselves rather than to God, 43; of "just one" can lead to addiction, 55–56

**Redemption of the dead:** work of, was instituted during the premortal existence, 89

**Relief Society:** helps sisters develop inner strength, 12–14; declaration of, gives direction, 12, 13; donates quilts to Albania and Moldova, 13; releasing and sustaining of the general presidency of, 24; young adult women are needed in, 100; is a great organization, 106; does tremendous good across the earth, 106

**Repentance:** we all need, 14; follow the Savior through, 17; a moving testimony induces, 27; conversion is the fruit of, 27–28; the Savior's invitation to repent, 29; our capacity for, will increase as we pray for guidance, 29; abusive husbands called upon to repent, 64; Atonement brings, 75; is necessary to be filled with the love of God, 98; peace Jesus promised is expressed through, 103; those who are abusive will remain in turmoil until they come to Christ in, 103; *See also* Forgiveness

**Responsibility:** of parents to provide for their children, 7–8; parents are to teach, to children, 8; accept, even when we don't feel adequate, 85

**Restoration:** testify of, to new members, 32; of the priesthood, 52–53, 62, 80, 92; through Joseph Smith, 18, 32, 56, 83; testimony of, comes after faith is tried, 56; Joseph Smith's story of, is a source of joy, 94; testimony of, comes from asking with faith, 94–95

**Resurrection:** Jesus is the, 16; the Spirit gives assurance of, 39; Jesus' other miracles do not compare to, 44; of Christ, 82–83

**Retention.** *See* New members

**Returned missionaries:** should never forget that they are still elders, 64; counseled to be worthy of temple marriage, 64

**Revelation:** be teachable to receive, 35–36; labor to receive, 36; obey when we receive, and more will be given, 36; the Lord promises to give, as we ask, 53; Christ guides His Church through, 83; Joseph Smith received, as a result of reading the scriptures, 94

## S

**Sabbath:** keeping, holy brings incomparable blessings, 38–39

**Sacrament:** we renew our covenants when we partake of, 30, 82; renews the cleansing effect of baptism, 38; helps qualify us to have the Spirit's companionship, 38; strengthens testimony, 38; brings incomparable blessings, 38–39

**Sacrifice:** of early Church members, 2; Church members make, to bless others, 12; of Peter, James, Andrew, and John to follow the Savior, 15; of a young woman to be baptized, 17; is the very essence of the Atonement, 43–44; the Atonement is the great and last, 75

**Salvation:** obedience to gospel laws brings, 39; is the work of the Church, 66; is in

the Father and His Son only, 73; the Lord has given, freely, 73; the Lord is our, 81, 107; we can be the means of bringing, 82; through the Atonement of Christ, 82; is made available to those who die without a knowledge of the gospel, 89; we go to church to receive ordinances of, 95. *See also* Plan of salvation

**Saturday afternoon session, 23**

**Saturday morning session, 2**

**Savior.** *See* Jesus Christ

**Schultz, R. Conrad, 33**

**Scott, Richard G., 26**

**Scriptures:** tell us to love and teach children, 7; doctrine of tithing is woven throughout, 10; study of, affects our relationship with God, 13; new visiting teaching messages invite sisters to read, 14; story of steelworker reading, during lunch break, 18; words of the Savior come to us through, 28; feast on, rather than just read, 31; obey the words of, for the feast to be nourishing, 31; teach obedience, 35; study, to receive divine instruction, 36; warnings of, on things to avoid, 40; Lehi was filled with the Spirit when he read, 53; reading, brings impressions and promptings, 53; study of, can change the night to day, 53; youth counseled to carefully study, 81; spiritual light is generated by studying, 81; Joseph Smith received many revelations as a result of reading, 94; study, to know God, 94; commandment to be peacemakers is woven throughout, 105–6. *See also* Book of Mormon

**Second Coming, 51, 93**

**Selfishness:** pleases the adversary, 13, 33; keeps us from full consecration, 42

**Self-pity:** we cannot afford to waste our lives in discouragement and, 14

**Service:** of Relief Society sisters, 12, 13; builds inner strength, 12, 13; helps us become less preoccupied with our problems, 13; less important things can keep us from rendering, 15; removes a hidden

wedge between neighbors, 22; is crucial to enduring, 31; those who attend church to give, are rarely disappointed, 38; the Church gives us opportunities for, 38; helps bring about conversion, 38; give, to become a benefit to others, 52; youth leaders should emphasize, 52; helps us overcome the tendency to envy and covet, 73; is the finest exercise for the heart, 73; helps us find peace, 76; helps generate spiritual light, 81

**Sin:** we cannot follow Christ when we cling to, 17; repent of, and be converted, 29; Lamoni's father commits to give away, to know God, 36; can be forgiven, 39; youth counseled to keep free from, 51; priesthood holders must not indulge in, or try to cover, 62, 63; the race is against, not each other, 74; the Holy Ghost purifies us from 80; Jesus atoned for, 82, 88, 92, 107; there is no peace in, 103; the Light of Christ leads us to repent of, 103; look to Christ for a remission of, 108. *See also* Repentance, Temptation

**Smith, Joseph:** First Vision of, 18, 32, 83, 92, 95, 108; revelations of, bear testimony of the Atonement, 37; life of, demonstrates the power of prayer, 53, 94; set an example of prayer, 69–70; adversity of, 74, 76; was foreordained, 88; nonmembers encouraged to read the story of, 94; had an intense desire to know God, 94; received revelation as a result of studying the scriptures, 94; meditated about eternal truths, 95; showed how to draw closer to God, 96; knowledge of the Godhead came through, 108

**Smoot, Mary Ellen W., 12**

**Spirit.** *See* Holy Ghost

**Statistical Report, 25**

**Steuer, Robert R., 47**

**Stories:** of a young man who has been blessed by the Perpetual Education Fund, 5; of Boyd K. Packer holding a street orphan in Peru, 6; of an orphan boy in Japan, 6; of suffering children, 6; of disabled children and their parents, 7, 90; of friends helping a dwarf boy in Argentina, 8; of young Earl C. Tingey

learning to pay a full tithing, 9–10; of Mary Fielding Smith paying tithing, 11; of a man in Africa paying tithing, 11–12; of Susanna Stone Lloyd's strength in adversity while crossing the plains, 12–13; of the Relief Society donating 1,000 quilts to people in Albania and Moldova, 13; of a young woman who sacrificed much to be baptized, 17; of a steelworker who reads the scriptures during lunch despite chiding coworkers, 18; of a faller's wedge left between tree limbs, 19; of a man who didn't join the Church because of a neighbor's offense, 19–20; of a family who forgave a bishop's oversight, 20; of a woman who felt she'd ruined her life and lost hope, 21; of brothers who held a grudge and hadn't spoken to each other for 62 years, 21; of a woman who regrets not letting a neighbor cross her property, 21–22; of Grant Remund serving his neighbor to remove a hidden wedge, 22; of Nkosiyo Eddie Lupahla's conversion, 30–31; of sneaker waves on the Oregon coast, 33; of a less-active member who asked what the Savior has done for him, 37–38; of L. Tom Perry's father working for Joseph F. Smith, 45–46; of Ben B. Banks and his family making a long bicycle trip, 49–51; of Richard G. Scott and Ben B. Banks canoeing in a bad storm, 50; of Wilford Woodruff's missions, 51–52; of Spencer J. Condie arranging for a young woman to be invited to Church activities, 52; of the *Titanic*, 54–55; of J. Reuben Clark Jr. counseling one of his children before a date, 55; of calling a stake president who didn't know he had a testimony, 56–57; of Tahitian sea captains who pray and then go, 58; of the Cummings family going to be sealed in the New Zealand Temple, 59; of the missionary service and miraculous preservation of Walter Krause, 60; of the calling of James Womack as a patriarch, 61; of James E. Faust praying on a ship during World War II, 68–69; of a family praying that a bomb would not go off, 69; of a six-year-old praying and being comforted, 77; of giving a report card emphasizing the strengths of a troubled boy, 78; of a wagon driver helping Agnes Caldwell help herself on a difficult journey, 79;

of train engineers traveling at night, 84; of a man who took steps for his faith to grow, 84–85; of a young woman in Brazil paying tithing, 85–86; of building a firm foundation for the temple in Mexico City, 87; of a faithful woman who was recently widowed, 90; of a faithful missionary who was afflicted with cancer, 90; of Gene R. Cook's friend who was always angry, 97; of Gene R. Cook's friend who responded faithfully to trials, 97; of the transformation of a poor family after baptism, 104–5

**Strength:** Relief Society builds inner, 12–14; how to build inner, 13; serving others builds, 13–14; being united builds, 14; of women is great, 14; rely on God's, 57, 67; the Lord gives, 104, 107

**Submissiveness:** yielding hearts to God brings sanctification, 28; of Nephi, 36; is accomplished by incremental improvements, 41; should be full, not holding back part, 41–44; helps us meet challenges, 42; requires meekness, 42; of our wills is all we really have to give to God, 43; of the Savior during the Atonement, 44, 70; full, brings God's fullness, 44; enhances our individuality, 44; to the Lord's will in our prayers, 70; to fulfilling the Lord's desires, not our own, 100–101; to God, accelerates the sanctification process, 101; to go and do what the Lord wants, 102. *See also* Consecration

**Suffering.** *See* Adversity

**Summary of conference music,** 108

**Sunday afternoon session,** 87

**Sunday morning session,** 66

**Sustaining of Church officers,** 24

## T

**Teaching:** of children, 7, 8, 10; true disciples are teachable, 35, 36; blessings of gospel, 39

**Technology:** can be a net that keeps us from following Christ, 15; Satan's use of, 46

**Temple:** dedications in 2001, 26; marriage, 40; encouragement to be worthy of marriage in, 50, 64; story of building a firm foundation for, in Mexico City, 87

**Temptation:** Joseph's example of fleeing from, 47; some falsely think they are invincible to, 54–56; David's succumbing to, 55; counsel for resisting, 55–56. *See also* Adversary, Sin

**Testimony:** having, is not necessarily the same as being converted, 27; comes from the Holy Ghost, 27, 32, 57; vitalizes faith, 27; share, with new members, 32; must be sincere, 32; should bear witness of the Savior, the Father, the Holy Ghost, and the Restoration, 32; sacrament strengthens, 38; doubts are not unusual as youth develop, 56; may not come until faith has been tried, 56; grows from devoted service, 56–57; comes gradually, 57; coming to know that we have, 57; we must exercise faith to receive, 57; of Apostles about Christ, 92–93; ask with faith to receive, of the Restoration, 94–95; is a gift that God gives only to those who ask with real intent, 95; through the Holy Ghost, 95

**Thoughts:** let virtue garnish, 64

**Tingey, Earl C., 9**

**Titihing:** story of young Earl C. Tingey learning to pay, 9–10; teach children to pay, 10; in biblical times, 10; in the story of the widow's mite, 10; is the law of revenue for the Church, 10; is a way to show loyalty to the Lord, 10–11; law of, restored in this dispensation at Far West, 11; new members counseled to pay, 11; story of Mary Fielding Smith paying, 11; story of a man in Africa paying, 11–12; paying, roots family in making and keeping temple covenants, 12; not paying, denies people of blessings, 12; paying, brings a special peace, 12; paying, diminishes fears concerning finances, 12; blessings of paying, 39; paying, helps us put worldly property and power in perspective, 39; story of a young woman in Brazil paying, 85–86

**Transgression.** *See* Sin

**Trials.** *See* Adversity

**Tribulation:** blessings come after much, 7. *See also* Adversity

**Truth:** teach children to walk in, 7; bring up children in, 8; the Holy Ghost testifies of, 27, 32, 38, 53; testify of, to new members, 32; the Holy Ghost guides us to, 56; the Church is anchored to a bedrock of, 88; our faith should be anchored to eternal, 90; have a sincere desire to know, 94; God is the source of all, 94; meditate about eternal, 95

## U

**Unity:** builds strength in families, stakes, and wards, 14; we must have, in efforts to save souls, 14; we must have, not schisms that come from envy and competition, 73

## V

**Virtue.** *See* Chastity

## W

**Walker, William R., 102**

**Wealth:** story of the rich young man, 15, 42, 92; those who give generously of, follow the Savior, 18; accumulation of, will be unimportant when we stand before the bar of God, 64; many prefer, of the world over the riches of eternity, 92. *See also* Prosperity

**Wirthlin, Joseph B., 15**

**Wisdom:** danger of relying on the world's 34; of God is greater than our own, 36; we learn, from God, 36; do not put our own, ahead of God's, 40; activities should help youth increase in, 52; of those who walk by faith will be great, 86; counsel to those who lack, 94

**Wives:** glorify the Father in bearing the souls of men, 9; priesthood holders should not exercise compulsion upon, 62; warnings against abuse of, 64–65. *See also* Marriage, Women

**Women:** glorify the Father in bearing the souls of men, 9, 88; bless the lives of individuals and families around the world, 12; great inner strength of, 14; are not without men in the Lord, 64; received special gifts in the premortal existence, 88; the Lord loves the, of the Church, 100. *See also* Mothers, Wives

**Word of Wisdom:** blessings of obeying, 39; Church leaders have warned us to avoid dangerous substances proscribed in, 40

**Work:** can become so consuming that it keeps us from following Christ, 15; is necessary to receive divine instruction, 36; most important, is within the home, 64; blessings sought through prayer sometimes require, 68

**World:** “nets” of, keep many from following Christ, 15–16; leave the nets of, behind and follow the Savior, 18; Satan wants us to follow the ways of, 33; Satan wants us to rely on the learning of, 34; recreational pleasures of, do not compare with blessings of keeping the Sabbath holy, 38–39; paying tithing helps us put the things of, in perspective, 39; pleasing the gods of, violates the first commandment, 42; inordinately pursuing even the good things of, can cause us to omit the weightier matters, 43; youth encouraged to keep clean from the sins of, 51; priesthood holders must stand above the ways of, 62; allurements of, tell us that what we have isn’t enough, 72; compares and ranks people, 73; explanation of why we can’t afford to have “one foot in Babylon,” 81; darkness is never far away in, 81; many prize the riches of, over the riches of eternity, 92; inner peace dispels fear of the discord of, 103

**Worship:** of bodies, 43; Jesus Christ is the focus of our, 107

**Worth.** *See* Individual worth

**Worthiness:** to be married in the temple, 50, 64; to receive guidance from the Holy Ghost, 50; to build the kingdom of God, 51; to receive the ministering of angels, 48, 53, 63; to exercise the priesthood 62–63, 66; to have the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost, 95

## Y

**Young men:** counseled to follow the Holy Ghost, 48, 53; decisions of, will determine future, 49; need to establish good patterns, 49–50; encouraged to set worthy goals, 50; counseled to remain focused on their eternal destiny, 51; encouraged to keep free from sin, 51; admonished to follow the prophets, 51; encouraged to serve others, 52, 53–54; may have angels minister, 53, 63; should become ministering angels to others, 53; may have doubts as testimonies develop, 56; can receive an unwavering testimony, 56; must not indulge in unseemly behavior or profane language, 63. *See also* Aaronic Priesthood, Youth

**Young women.** *See* Youth

**Youth:** benefit from the Perpetual Education Fund, 5; counseled to heed their leaders, 40, 81; activities should help, increase in wisdom, 52; teach, to work together in councils, 52; leaders of, should emphasize service, 52; activities of, should reach out to others, 52; encouraged to read the scriptures and *For the Strength of Youth*, 81; counseled to claim the protective light of the gospel, 81. *See also* Children, Young Men









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